

Holiday 2009

PlayStation The Official Magazine ■ PlayStation 3 □ PlayStation Portable ■ PlayStation Network ■ PlayStation 2



### **Features**

- ASSASSIN'S CREED II We wield the Assassin's blade for our exclusive review.
- **HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE** 12 days. 118 gifts. Pure gamer joy.
- **TOP 10 GAMES YOU'RE** DOOMED TO MISS THIS HOLIDAY So good, but so easy to

overlook.

- Update
- The 10: The stories everyone's talking about
- **60 MINUTES WITH MAG** 
  - FPSs: Killed in action?
  - PTOM Interview: Eric Lempel
  - Final Fantasy XIII predictions





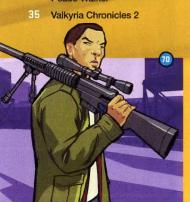






**Previews** 

- 35 Army of Two: The 40th Day
- BIOSHOCK 2
- 22 Darksiders
- 34 Dead Rising 2
- 34 Fat Princess: Fistful of Cake
- 30 Gran Turismo 5
- 32 Just Cause 2
- 28 Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker







Reviews

- 79 Astro Boy
- 75 Beaterator
- BORDERLANDS
- BRÜTAL LEGEND
- DJ HERO
- 77 Dragon Ball: Raging Blast
- **61)** FAIRYTALE FIGHTS
- GRAND THEFT AUTO: CHINATOWN WARS
- 85 IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey
- 30 Jak and Daxter: The Lost Frontier
- 83 NBA 2K10
- 74 Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising
- Pinball Hall of Fame: Williams Edition
- 84 Pro Evolution Soccer 2010
- F4 Ratchet & Clank Future: A Crack in Time
- 75 SAW
- 82 Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron
- 75 Star Wars The Clone Wars: Republic Heroes
- Star Wars The Clone Wars: Republic Heroes (PSP)
- 75 Tekken 6
- 85 Tornado Outbreak
- Undead Knights
- 72 WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010



Network

- Mini Games
  We review the first wave of Minis
- PlayStation Network Corner Previews, Reviews, Downloads, Video Delivery Service
- 32 Letters





### **Editor's Note**

"Now, you've got a corpse in a car, minus a head, in a garage. Take me to it." - Pulp Fiction

Chances are you

are now thinking either,

'What is WRONG with this

guy?' or 'Where on Earth

Then I began to consider the gift-buying

because we're often very picky in ways non-

season. We gamers are a challenge to shop for

gamers don't understand. So Roger constructed

a massive gift guide you can hand to your loved

ones and say "See? This is what I want." On the

flip side, if you have no idea what to get for the

folks on your list, there's plenty of stuff in there

that anyone would love. Just grab some of the

non-game items, wrap 'em in shiny paper, and

You see where I'm going now, right? This

issue of PTOM is The Wolf. As a reader, you're

just like John Travolta and Samuel L. Jackson

in the film. Granted, your hairstyle is probably

different, you likely enjoy a different profession,

and we really hope your particular crisis is less

horrifying. But the point is: if you care as much

can be an overwhelming time of year. And like

The Wolf, we're here to guide you through the

at all. Thanks for reading, have a joyous, safe

holiday, and here's to a great 2010.

tough bits and make it all seem like no problem

about gaming as we do here at PTOM tower, this

get right back to playing Uncharted 2.

is he going with this?'

You're right. It would have made sense to start this holiday issue with a heartwarming, inspirational quote from a classic holiday special. Something from It's a Wonderful Life, A Charlie Brown Christmas, or even my own favorite holiday special, Nestor the Long-Eared Christmas Donkey. But when I started thinking about the holiday season and this issue of PlayStation: The Official Magazine, the gruesome sentence above kept popping back into my mind. No, Pulp Faction isn't exactly a holiday movie, actor Harvey Keitel looks nothing like Santa Claus and his character is named "The Wolf", not "The Reindeer." Nonetheless, this was the quote that inspired me the most.

Chances are you are now thinking either. "What is WRONG with this guy?" or "Where on Earth is he going with this?" So let's take a few moments to unwrap an answer for the second question (you're on your own with the first one).

I thought about the flood of games that hit store shelves every year. Even after the Great Games Exodus of 2009, when 80-percent of everything moved to January and February (see page 14), there's more out there than you can play or afford. It's maddening. But we're here to help. Turn to our always-vital reviews section, to this month's Assassin's Creed II cover feature on page 38, and to the feature that calls out 10 under-the-radar games you're in danger of overlooking on page 58. You readers honor us by paying good money for our magazine, and we view it as our job to reward that honor with rock-solid advice on how best to spend the rest of your hard-earned dollars.





**Double Coverage** Assassin's Creed II cover boy Ezio has two hidden wrist daggers, so it seemed a decent excuse to give this issue two different covers. Out in the wild, you'll see Ezio doing what he does best: shoving something sharp into someone else's soft parts. And subscribers will get the second cover, which showcases one of the aforementioned implements of bloodletting. Which do you prefer? Let us know at PTOM\_Letters@

#### PlayStation: The Official Magazine Statement of Ownership

Post Office Notice: Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation for Periodicals class privileges as required by 39 USC3685: 1, Title of Publication: PlayStation: The Official Magazine, 2. Publication No. 1941-5303, 3. Date of Filing: 10/1/09. 4. Issue Frequency: Monthly plus Holiday issue following December issue. 5. Number of issues published annually: 13. 6. Annual subscription price: \$20.00. 7. Complete mailing address of known office of publication: Future US, Inc., 4000 Shoreline Court, Suite 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080, 8/9. Complete address of the headquarters of general business offices of the publisher, editor and managing editor: Associate Publisher: Kristen Salvatore - 4000 Shoreline Court, Suite 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080; Editor-in-Chief: Eric Bratcher - same address; Managing Editor: Roger Burchill - same address. 10. Owner: Future US, Inc., 4000 Shoreline Court, Suite 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. Shareholder: Future PLC, Beauford Court, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA12BW U.K. 11/12. N/A. 13. Publication title: PlayStation: The Official Magazine. 14. Issue date for Circulation Data below: October 2009. 15. Extent and nature of circulation given in this order, number of average copies each issue during preceding 12 months followed by actual number of copies published nearest filing date: A. Total Number of Copies: 269,165; 235,103. B. Pald and/or Requested Circulation: (B1) Mail subscriptions Outside-County: 119,797; 96,215. (B2) Paid In-County Subscriptions: 0; 0. (B3) Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, counter sales, and Other Non-USPS Paid Distribution: 39,916; 38,000. (B4) Other Classes Mailed Through USPS: 0; 0. C. Total Paid and/or Requested: 159,713; 134,215. D. Free Distribution; (D1) Free Outside-County Copies: 1,649; 1,775. (D2) Free In-County Copies: 0; 0. (D3) Free Other Classes Mailed Through USPS; 0; 0. (D4) Free Distribution Outside the Mail: 400; D. E. Total Free Distribution: 2,049; 1,775. F. Total Distribution: 161,762; 135,990. G. Copies Not Distributed: 107,403; 99,113. H. Total: 269,165; 235,103. I. Percent Paid and/or Requested: 99%; 99%. 16. Publication of Statement of Ownership is required and is printed in this issue of this publication Holiday 2009. 17. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete: Stephanie Blake, Circulation Manager.

## PlayStation

NAGING EDITOR Roger Burchill SISTANT EDITOR Scott Butterworth

en D'Aprile, Brett Elston, Mike Gapper, Henry Gilbert, rew Hayward, Owen Hill, Chris Hudak, Nathan Irvine, ick Joynt, Matt Keast, Nathan Meunier, Tyler Nagata, an, Carey Peck, Douglass C. Perry, Rob Smith

ART DIRECTOR Ken Bousquet DESIGN CONTRIBUTORS Shelley Szudera, Gary Liew

ATE PUBLISHER Kristen Salvatore atore@futureus.com

IOR DIRECTOR NATIONAL ADVERTISING Rachelle Considine 0-238-2505, rconsidine@futureus.com EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR INTEGRATED SALES Nate Hunt 415-269-5408, nhunt@futureus.com

413-269-3408, nhunterutureus.com REGIONAL SALES (DISECTOR Isaac Ugay 949-305-0767, jugayéfutureus.com REGIONAL SALE SANMAEBR Rachel Campos 550-745-9207, reamposéfutureus.com ACOUNT MANGAR Arthur St. Germain 650-238-2571, astgermainéfutureus.com MEGRATES NALES (DRECTOR A.O. Pomparelli 223-342-1888, joomparelliéfutureus.com INTEGRATED SALES MANAGER David Wells 646-723-5493, dwells@futureus.com DETROIT CONSUMER MANAGER Alan Dickinsor 248-792-2408, alandmedia@comcast.net ADVERTISING COORDINATOR Heidi Hapin hhapin@futureus.com SENIOR MARKETING MANAGER Andrea Recio-Ang

KETING COORDINATOR Allyson Kardel

arecio-ang@futureus.com

PRODUCTION DIRECTOR Richie Lesovoy
SENIOR PRODUCTION COORDINATOR Larry Briseno

CONSUMER MARKETING CIRCULATION MANAGER Stephanie Blake NEWSSTAND DIRECTOR BIII Shewey CONSUMER MARKETING OPERATIONS DIRECTOR Lisa Radier BUSINESS MANAGER Elliot Kiger SR. ONLINE CONSUMER MARKETING MANAGER Jennifer Trinkner CUSTOMER SERVICE MANAGER Mike Frassica



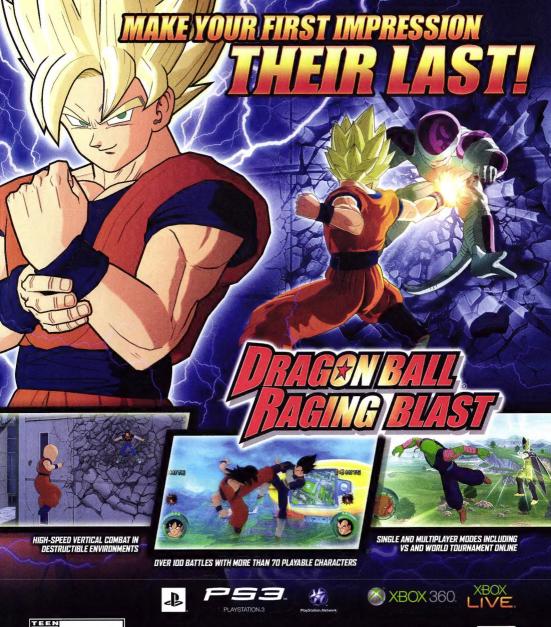
FUTURE US, Inc. 4000 Shoreline Court, Suite 400 South San Francisco, CA 94080

PMENT Tyson Daugherty CES Nancy DuBois

ure pic is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange

TURE PLC Monmouth St., Bath, Avon, BA1 2BW, England

ION-EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN: Roper Party















The stories everyone's talking about

Is the FPS ammo clip empty? page 8

Cuter than a monkey and no poop throwing page 10

PlayStation guru: Eric Lempel page 12

Valentine's Day is the new Christmas page 14

Shades of Castlevania page 16

Games that need Motion Control page 17

Your Amazon Wish List just got longer page 17

 ■ We read Final Fantasy XIII's mind page 18

**Burning Question:** Pressure relief? page 19



19:00 HOURS Alright, we downloaded the beta earlier today, so we're all set to play some MAG for the mag... Sorry, couldn't resist such a massive play on words.

19:01 Or maybe we're not so ready. Looks like Zipper Interactive has already released a few updates (which makes sense-they're trying to fix it as they go). Better get patching.

19:40 Ok, after a major false start, we're finally ready to play. The anticipation has merely sharpened our desire to kill...and work cooperatively with our team or whatever.

19:42 The Start screen casually reminds us that this is not the final game. Graphics, audio, features, none of it's perfect yet. Please keep that in mind as we describe our impressions.

19:44 All right, creating a new character. Time to pick a team: the seasoned Valor, the slick, efficient Raven, or the vicious S.V.E.R. We're going for S.V.E.R. because, hey, who doesn't love an underdog?

19:46 Picked a voice and a face: now it's time to adjust our weapons loadout. Options seem pretty limited when you start (only three primary weapons, no attachments or auxiliary equipment), but there are slots available for more equipment. Do we have to earn new weapons or are they simply not available in the beta? Oh well, at least we get a hockey mask.

19:52 Taking a second now to explore the "Barracks," which lists your stats, rank, leadership capacity (you can literally fight

















your way up the command chain and earn extra abilities), and unlockable skills, which are organized by the type of solider they might apply to, such as Marksman, Assault, Electronics, Close Quarters, and so on. The upgrades are mostly what you would expect faster reload times, extra attachments, and the like.

19:59 Finally time to play! Hopping into the only game available: a 32-vs.-32-player Sabotage match. Basically, our team just has to take control of two points and then destroy a third. Easy.

20:01 The match starts and everyone takes off running. Hang on, guys, aren't we supposed to have a plan or something?

20:05 We just headed for the big blinking "A" on our heads-up display and stumbled into a massive firefight at the base of the first control point. Both teams have actually dug themselves in pretty well. We're going to flank right...

20:07 Picked off a couple guys...but then got caught. We're going to select another preset loadout before we re-spawn. The AK-47 felt a little light and poppy, and we want more punch. Time to grab the rifle.

**20:10** We're having a bit of trouble figuring out where to go. Everyone seems pretty scattered. The sniper rifle was a good choice, though, Earning XP *Modern Warfare*-style.

20:12 Most people seem to have headsets, which is a good sign for a game that really requires you to work as a team. Too bad these guys won't shut up about sniper rifles. Come on team, focus!

20:14 "Too close for missiles. Switching to guns." Er, well, grenades. Whatever, Top Gun was a great movie. (By the way, we got gunned down immediately after this.)

20:15 Right after our little grenade incident, a teammate swung by and revived us before we bled out. Right on! We tried to thank him via headset but he didn't respond.

20:19 Without upgrades, the sniper rifle doesn't zoom very far and isn't a guaranteed one-shot kill. However, there isn't much recoil either. We're having a grand time just runnin'-and-gunnin' with it (and yes, this time we got the kill).

**20:21** Got three in a row! But then got wasted as we tried to heal ourselves with our med gun. Can't win 'em all.

20:22 However, it turns out that you can parachute into certain spawn points. That almost makes it worth dying.



20:25 Oh great, a camper behind our spawn point. Will someone take care of him, please?

20:29 Success! Our team takes home the win, and we escape with a boatload of experience. We would have been happier with fewer deaths, but when it's 32-on-32, death comes from all directions.

#### Mission De-brief

Okay, so it was more like an hour-and-a-half with MAG, but we couldn't foresee the major updates we'd have to install. And even with the extra time, we still didn't fully experience the commander responsibilities—like on-the-fly frago orders—that will set MAG apart from other online shooters. Overall, the game felt a bit chaotic, but as noted, it hasn't been finalized yet. Some of that inital impression is likely due to our limited hands-on time with MAG, but we expect measures will be taken to improve the situational awareness of in-game events. Still, a fun-filled hour.



# First-Person Shooters ARE DEAD

The creators of *BioShock*, *Borderlands*, and *Deus Ex* tell us why RPG/shooter hybrids are killing everything...except *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* 









ole-playing games like Final Fantasy and Doom-style first-person shooters used to be two great tastes that nobody thought would taste good together. But just like that first guy who put barbeque sauce on a pizza, pioneering first-person. shooters like System Shock. Deus Ex, and BioShock created new flavors by adding generous doses of RPG-style character customization to all the bullets and flying gibs. Now it's hard to find FPS games that don't have role-playing elements. The genre as we knew it is virtually extinct.

We tracked down four designers who made these new hybrids happen and asked them how these two genres continue to merge, evolve, and transition into something previously

#### A System Shock No Longer

Examples of each genre affecting the other abound. One of 2008's most acclaimed games, Besthesda's Fallout 3, is a first-person RPG with lots of FPS-style guns and exploding craniums. Conversely, dozens of first-person shooters—Bio-Shock, Far Cry, Borderlands—have evolved to incorporate role-playing elements.

Ken Levine, Creative Director on BioShock and the Director on a new, unannounced project at developer 2K Boston, explained it this way. "(RPG-style] growth is here and it's paying huge dividends on the shooter genre. It's almost expected now. I was playing the Uncharted 2 multiplayer demo last night, and

there it was. *Red Faction: Guer-rilla*. Boom, there it is. It's going to be everywhere."

"In part, [there] is an ongoing drive to model more elements of reality, turning them into challenging and interesting game systems along the way," said Arkane Games' Designer Harvey Smith, who was Lead Designer on Deus Ex and Deus Ex: Invisible War. "My hope is that action games continue to get richer. Every now and then you get some magical combination, like BioShock or Portal, or earlier Underworld or Arx Fatalis. The shooter and the RPG have been absorbing useful aspects of one another for a long while."

Gearbox's President Randy Pitchford (Borderlands, Brothers in Arms) doesn't see that the feelings produced in RPGs and shooters to be mutually exclusive anymore. "Leveling up feels good. Making choices that are meaningful to the gameplay is fun. Mixing this all up is really compelling. Borderlands is incredibly fun and addicting because of how it's taken traditional RPG elements for growth, discovery and choice and blended it with the raw fun of the core gameplay of a shooter."

#### New models: BioShock 2 and Borderlands

2007's first-person shooter Bio-Shock took players to an underwater city known as Rapture. Thanks to sophisticated artificial intelligence routines, BioShock's characters had "lives" of their own. This created an RPG-like sensation that the world carried on even if the player wasn't around.

"In Bioshock, you can watch a Big Daddy for a while. It does not spawn when you open a door, ready to fight. It is active in the environment with you, not necessarily hostile, and it behaves according to some consistent rules," says Raphael Colantonio (Arx Fatalis and Dark Messiah), Smith's partner at Arkane Games. "Suddenly, you have an idea: Attack him, lure him into another area, and turn him hostile to another enemy. That's an incredibly strong moment...and it's not possible in all games."

BioShock also gave players a sophisticated plotline and moral choices, both elements predominantly found in traditional RPGs. The sequel, BioShock 2 (due in February), builds on the original game's sophisticated AI systems and moral examination, giving us a new enemy, the "evil" Big Sister, and puts players into the role of one of the first game's enemies, the Big Daddy.

"I think one of the most interesting developments [in FPSs] is trying to bring across and deepen mechanics from RPGs, but without some of the more abstract methods of the past; adding new mechanics,

Much like this off-beat pairing of a cute girl and a battered robot, the new era of shooters brings form and function together in new and exciting ways. Just like cyborgs.



but presenting them in the gameworld in a more elegant way," savs Smith.

Post-apocalyptic openworld shooter Borderlands takes the addictive collecting and character-building qualities that make RPGs like Diablo and World of Warcraft multi-million sellers, and blends them with the fluid action of shooters.

"The RPG-style elements do not fight against the shooter [elements] in Borderlands, said Pitchford, "Instead, the RPG elements layer on top to create more motivations and more rewards for the moment to moment behaviors. I think this is going to change things. I expect that after Borderlands we'll see more and more RPG-style elements being drawn into our shooters. I'm certain I'm not the only game designer who anticipates this."

Confronting Call of Duty Retailers believe that because of the long-standing recession, consumers will only buy big-named games this holiday. Activision's Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 is plowing into November like a rampaging elephant on fire, sending

countless lesser-known games scurrying into 2010 just to get away from it. How will RPGshooter hybrids perform against this year's 800-pound gorilla?

"Anyone who just carbon copies is going to fail," said Smith, "People are afraid of risk, but as players we all want the next step...novelty and richness in games. Call of Duty: Modern Warfare innovated in so many ways and presented such a high level of polish that there's a lot to learn from the game. I'm sure each developer responded to it differently. For me, the controller interface revolutionized my enjoyment of FPS on a console, two of the semi-interactive story moments choked me up. and the multiplayer unlock system [not unlike an RPG leveling-up system] was stunningly cool. And, somehow, all of it was presented in a very. accessible way."

Pitchford adds, "To me, Call. of Duty is like a thrill ride at the theme park-it's exhilarating, but super-crafted, on-rails, and over quickly. I think people who enjoy that rush will, before too



"Here's the thing about guys like Infinity Ward... Don't try to beat them at their own game. They're the best at what they do."



long, think about getting out there and going for a more realworld thrill-like sky diving or scuba diving. Call of Duty is the big dog this round, but it wasn't in the last (something else was) and it probably won't be in the future. I tend to like to bet on the future-that's why I bet so much on Borderlands."

Levine puts it another way. "Here's the thing about guys like Infinity Ward (developers of Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2). Don't try to beat them at their own game. They're the best at what they do. Don't try to out-croon Sinatra. Don't try to out-pitch Josh Beckett. Don't try to out-boogie Tony Manero, At 2K Boston/Irrational we always did our own kind of thing. And we're going to focus on that. And when we venture into some new spaces (which we will) we're going to find the path less traveled. And we're going to

# 3 Baby Einstein?

First, find someone who can draw. Okay, now sketch an object like a car, a plane, or in this case, a rocket and show it to the carriera.

EyePet is waaaay smarter and more adorable than you'd thin! Are real pets obsolete?

It can draw, it learns songs you sing it, and when it sleeps, it dreams of you. Sony's EyePet is designed to make you believe that the cheerful monkey/kit-ten/puppy thing on your TV is a living, breathing creature. And wow, is it convincing. By using the PlayStation Eye camera to combine you and your living room with this impish rogue, EyePet creates a remarkably realistic little illusion.

Your creature can track the tiniest movement, How does the engaging with anything he sees. pet respond Rub your fingers to cruelty? on his head and he'll nuzzle them. Honestly, we Push your hand toward him, and didn't have he'll bounce backwards, scowling. the heart to And he's certainly loveable. Even find out-yet.

may find themselves happily feeding, cleaning, stroking and playing with the squeaky imp for hours on end. Or completing daily challenges, from taking photos of your animal to hitting high scores in bowling games to digging a little garden to earning pet clothes or new or upgraded toys.

hardened gamers

But don't be fooled: cute though it may be, EyePet is no

simple, boring pet sim. Amazingly, it can actually learn. Bring out his stereo and sing a few notes; he'll warble them back. We taught ours "Baa Baa Black Sheep," then marvelled as he began singing it later that day.

For some real magic, hold a drawing up to the camera and your pet will sketch what he sees. He's a little patchy if the outline isn't clear, but mostly, he'll faithfully recreate your art.

Best of all, objects drawn in his Magic Sketchbook will come to life, so if your pet draws the elements of a plane, you can actually put them together and make a plane for him to fly around in.

As a piece of tech, EyePet is incredible—it really showcases

the potential of PS Eye. As an actual gaming experience it's utterly heartwarming, though admittedly not exactly a game at all. We've only just met EyePet, but we honestly admit—with some manly embarrassment—to looking forward to seeing those big, round eyes smilling at us through our TV again.



Once your pet has recreated the image, it can be turned into a 30 object. And in this case, your pet can actually use it to take a rocket ride





# A FIRM DISCUSSION WITH **ERIC LEMPEL**

We speak to SCEA's Director of PlayStation Network Operations about the one issue that affects all PS3 gamers equally: Firmware

PTOM: Can you tell us a little about what goes into creating a Firmware update? What's the basic process from start to finish?

Eric Lempel: The whole idea is to really see what works, what we can improve on, and what we can add. We go about doing that in a few different ways. We do consumer research in addition to following our roadmap. We've had a very long roadmap of features that we've wanted to roll out, and clearly all of them couldn't be rolled out day one when the PS3 launched. So we've been implementing these features as we go along, and some of them take longer than others. There are still plenty of features on that roadmap. But there are plenty of times that we deviate from that plan or modify that plan a bit based on what's working and, in some cases, maybe some things that haven't been working that well... And I would say that while you do see a lot of things that are consumer facing come out of the Firmware updates, there are a ton of things that go into them behind the scenes as well. So whereas you may have seen an update where it had kind of a small feature or a little enhancement. there may have been a lot of great things in that Firmware update for developers to make games better or to help improve the way tools

What generally limits how much you can squeeze into an update? Is it planning or manpower or what?

work for them.

Of course time and manpower always factor in because there aren't limitless resources. And

there are sometimes key features that must go out in Firmware updates, For example, you saw on September 1, we released the 120GB PS3 and we did a Firmware update, and there were some enhancements in that specifically to bring on the new hardware. But occasionally we deviate from those plans... When [the features] are ready, we want them out!

Do you ever look to the community when choosing which features to add next, or is it more a matter of following that roadmap you mentioned?

We absolutely read all the feedback that we see on our blog when we do the firmware updates. We have people who look across different forums and different sites. And we also do our own testing-some very extensive testing, some qualitative and quantitative tests with users. There have been plenty of times that people have commented

on things and we've made changes based on what they've said. Some of them have been small and some have been bigger. But in some cases, we can't do complete testing because you never quite know how things will work until users have it.

We actually ran a poll recently in which we asked readers to name their most desired new feature, and the number one item was



I think it's incredibly popular. We know users want it, and like lots of other things that work cross-games, technically, it's complicated. But it's definitely something we're looking at.

Are you, personally, satisfied with how far the PS3's Firmware has come and where it is today?

What really gets me excited is when I think about 2006, when I first got on the PS3, and where we were then and how much it's changed since we've come to where we are today...

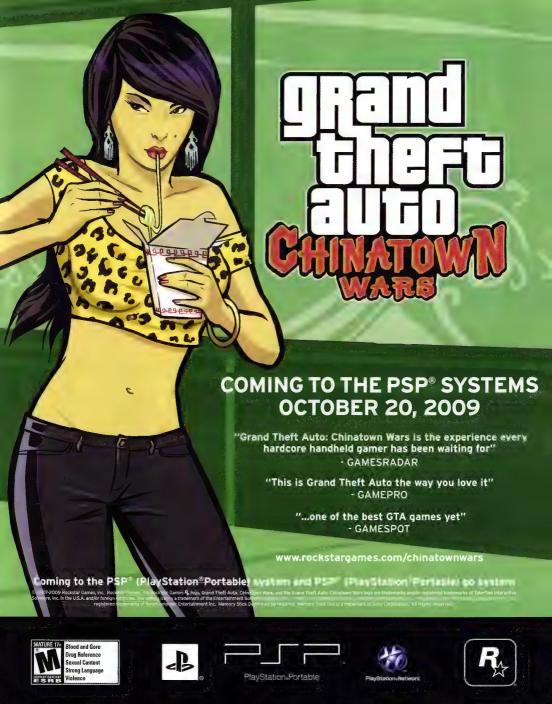
cial Magazine

back and I'm just like "Wow!" We started out with a store that looked completely different, we didn't have background downloading, we had a whole bunch of settings and controls that were a little complicated and not that easy to use, we didn't have remote play, we didn't have DLNA, we couldn't play certain file types like DIVX, there was no Blu-ray Live, and then there's the big ones: There was no in-game XMB, there was no Trophy system. So I'm extremely satisfied with what we've been able to pull off over the years, and those are just a few of the big features. But there's still a lot more I'd like to

see the PS3 do.







# SANTA IS A SLACKER

The holiday season once meant the biggest som of the year for game?
Not anymore

very single see by to 2009, the months leading up to the holiday season habeen absolutely flooded with big-name games releases. We're talking torrential downous here—games could have drowned. But this was seaning up a little different.

pours here—gamers could have drowned. But this sessing up a little difference. Thanks to a staggerin number of delays, this November—traditional the single most release heavy month—is looking but sparse. And strangenough, many of the gament were originally screen that were originally screen to drop in November 1987 to drop in November 1987 to February.

and to Fabruary.

In fact, February 2015
shaping up to be a better month for geming the
November 2009, Don't believe
us? Well we've taken every
PS3 game that's launching
during these two months (a
of press time) and assigned
a "hype" score based on what
we perceive to be level of
excitement surrounding it.
Even if you disagree with our
hype scores, the results are
surprising.

#### Holiday

Tollday		
Hype Score	Release Date	
1	3-Nov	Band Hero
	3-Nov	Block Banel 1 EGO
	3-Nov	Star Wars The Force Unleashed: Sith
	10-NoV	Call of Duty:
	1	Modern Warfare 2
	10-Nov	Oragon Ball Raging Blast
	10 Nov	Buzz: Quiz World
	1,0+Nov	Chaotic: Shadov Wurior:
	17-Nov	God of War
		Collection
	17-Nov	Assassin's Creed II
	17-Nov	Dragon Age: Origins
	17 Nov	Scene II. Bright Lights Big Screen
	17-Nov	Planet 51
	17-Nov	Tony Hawl RIDE
	24-Nov	Karaoke Revolution
3	24-Nov	Avatar •

#### February

j., -		-
3	1-Feb	Aliens vs. Predator
1	1-Feb	Two Worlds 2
2	2-Feb	R.U.S.E.
	2-Feb	ModNation Racers
3	9-Feb	Star Ocean: Last Hope
100	9-Feb	Dante's Inferno
- 5	9 reb	BioShack 2
3	15-Feb	Singularity
3	16-Feb	White Kringly Chronicles
1.4%	16-Feb	Heavy Rain
3_	23-Feb	Lost Planet 2
1	23-Feb	Sonic Racing /

Total (

Total



## Video Game Rentals Delivered to Your Door

Over 7,000 Titles • No Late Fees • Free Shipping



**Start now for only \$8.95** 

Go to gamefly.com







Now on your iPhone & iPho Touch



# NEW CASTLEVANIA: LORDS OF SHADOW SCREENS LOOK STRANGELY... COLOSSAL\*

ow can you tell if your buddy has played the PS2 cult-classic *Shadow of the Colossus*, in which the player and his horse went around climbing and killing Godzilla-sized living statues with glowing weak points? Well, yes, you could just ask. But it would be much more fun to show him these new screens of *Castlevania*: *Lords of Shadow* and see if he gasps in excitement. We're not about to declare this an unofficial sequel or anything (though we'd desperately love to), but it's obvious that the developers of this new *Shadow* have spent some time with a certain older, similarly named game.





boot Just so you know

Moving Forward

Motion controls are coming to LittleBigPlanet and Resident Evil 5. But what other games deserve to be set in motion?

ony revealed at September's Tokyo Game Show that its motion control system—which combines the PS Eye and a new, wand-like controller—will be "capable of recognizing and tracking a user's face and voice as well as body motion" and announced plans to "vigorously promote" its new control scheme both with games created specifically for the controller and by adding motion functionality to existing titles like LittleBig-Planet and Resident Evil 5 (now sporting the Director's Cut subtitle). But what other games would benefit from motion control? We name two that would put the Sixaxis to shame and one to be avoided at all cost.



#### Fight Night Round 4

Yes, we know, the Wii already has a boxing game, but here's the thing: Sony's motion controller will be far more sophisticated than the Wii-mote. For instance, it will be able to accurately gauge movement of the controller toward and away from the TV, as well as the location of the controller relative to your face. So imagine holding a controller in each hand, bobbing and weaving in real time as you land a flurry of satisfyingly impactful punches on Mike Tyson's big, tattooed melon. Awesome, right?



#### Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3

The motion controller could finally provide a lasting solution to seemingly insurmountable issue of controlling real-time strategy games on a console. With just a flick of the wrist, you could highlight a group of units, point to where you'd like them to go, and send them on their way even more easily than you could with a mouse and keyboard. Combine this with the voice command system from Tom Clancy's Endwar and you'd have the most intense, authentic battlefield-command simulation ever.



#### No Sports games, please

We don't know about you guys, but the idea of throwing a non-existent football over and over again is about as appealing as a Leisure Suit Larry game—same with attempting to swing a motion-controller-shaped bat or whack an invisible hockey puck. Just about the only sports that could possibly work are golf and tennis, but it's difficult to imagine those being anything be intensely boring and madderingly clumsy, respectively. Do us a favor, Sony, and remember that many gamers choose videogames over sports for a reason. If the motion controls don't legitimately enhance the action, don't force it.



Did you know that "motion controller" isn't the official name? It's true. Sony hasn't actually announced a name for the product. What do you think the motion controller should be called? Email us at PTOM Letters@futureus.

## Welcome to the Jungle

PSN content is now available through Amazon.com -

this time on Amazon.com. Located at Amazon.com/playstationnetwork, the PSN section already offers more than 200 pieces of downloadable content, including full PSP and PSN games, as well as add-on content for PS3 titles. But how, you ask? When you make a purchase, Amazon emails you a redemption code for your product, which you then punch in to your PS3 and volla—no more tracking down those ultra-rare PSN cards, dealing with a virtual wallet, or attaching a credit card to your PSN account. Plus, you can retrieve your code any time you need to re-download a game. The future is here, and it sure is convenient.





### THE **BURNING** QUESTION Our question this month:

Vinations graziust thing you developmed) team has ever done to relieve the presponed to



QUANTIC DREAM, CO-CEO AND WRITER/DIRECTOR OF HEAVY RAIN

We booked 50 buggies and spent a day doing a chase hunt in the Fontainbleau forest near Paris. It was a race between 10 teams of five buggies with a map of the area and a camera, with the objective to take pictures of specific clues to be discovered. When we left the garage for the forest, we drove through the streets escorted by police cars to stop the traffic for us. 100 people in 50 buggies escorted by cops. That was something. We spent the day driving in the area trying to find clues, driving from castle to castle in the forest, and we had dinner all together in the evening.

Our take; Seriously? A go-kart-bound scavenger/treasure hunt in the French countryside? Where do we sign up?

### ETCETER

All the other stuff that delights the PTOM crew and distracts us from our work and nelps us keep in touch with our inner-child, "There, there,...it'll be okay."



The geekier you are (like Eric), the more you'll love this decidedly adult cartoon series, a lovingly brutal parody of superheroes and villains-as well as Jonny Quest, Scooby-Doo, the '80s in general...pretty much everything. The main cast: a clueless-but-arrogant inventor, his two moronic sons, and their killing machine of a bodyguard, is brilliant. And while some episodes and characters aren't perfect on their own (stupid Moppets), the total package is must-see entertainment.



#### Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark | Book | \$15.99

While the rest of the PTOM staff is busy with their Christmas shopping, Carlos the Intern is still fixated on his favorite holiday, Halloween. Alvin Schwartz's collection of American Folklore horror tales is muy scary as advertised, but Carlos says its Stephen Gammell's artwork that creeps him out the most. Look up his name on Google images and try not to be scared. True story of Carlos' delinquent past; He had to pay for the book because he tossed it in the garbage...just two blocks away from the library. Good thing videogames rehabilitated him.



#### Robo-Tizzy | Mechanized editor from the future | Priceless

The lovely and talented Teresa Dun actually departed PTOM Towers last issue (not Eric's fault, so don't hate him), so we've set about building a robotic replacement. Thus far, Robo-Tizzy consists of a pair of straw-stuffed overalls and a balloon with a huge smile drawn on it, but her productivity just isn't what we'd hoped. If anyone has a spare HRP4C or Actroid-DER2 (Google 'em) lying around that you could send over, that would be great. Thanks.



#### Sunny Day Real Estate | Music | Affordable, now that the market crashed

Sunny Day Real Estate-one of Scott's favorite band names ever, and quite possibly one of his favorite bands as well. 15 years after the release of their most enduring album, Diary, the original lineup has finally reunited, which means big tours, reissues of the classic albums, and... the release of Diary as Rock Band DLC. No word yet on when it's coming, but Scott definitely plans to be there on day one. In the meantime, he's going to sit and listen to the old albums (and encourages you to do the same).



#### The Gathering Storm | Book | \$29.99

Roger has a love/hate relationship with Robert Jordan's The Wheel of Time series. The first half dozen or so books are the next best thing to the Lord of The Rings trilogy, but then the series draaaaged along until the author died prior to finishing the 12th and "final" book. Brandon Sanderson has been brought in to finish the series, but the "last" book has now morphed into three books. Arrgh! Just finish it already! But regardless, Roger will be first in line to buy The Gathering Storm when it releases.



#### Midnites for Maniacs | Movies | \$10

The historic Castro Theater in San Francisco is truly a sight to behold: authentic period marquee out front, awe-inspiring art deco interior, and an organ that rises out of the stage to entertain viewers during intermissions (senously). You'd think such a well-persevered example of opulent 20th century design would be a museum by now, but for just \$10, you can catch of a triple feature of long forgotten and underrated films on the first Friday of each month (approximately). Check Midnitesformaniacs.com for show listings...you might just see Scott there.



#### Batman: Arkham Asylum (15th anniversary) | Graphic Novel | \$17.99

Who says videogames are a bad influence? Why if it weren't for the Bahman: Arkham Asylum videogame, Carlos the Intern would never have read the Arkham Asylum graphic novel. Carlos enjoyed reading the book and spotting all the elements that appeared in the game. Yes, it's this confluence of interactive and traditional media that will make America a better, smarter, and more literate place. Maybe.



#### Where the Wild Things Are | Movie | \$10

It's a month of anticipation for Roger as his favorite childhood book, Maurice Sendak's Where the Wild Things Are, prepares to make its film debut. With movies like Adaptation and Being John Malkovich in his catalog, director Spike Jonze is an eclectic pick to man the helm of Wild Things. Which means the film will either be inspired genius or a horrible desecration of a beloved childhood classic. No pressure. Spike...but Roger has his eyes on you.



#### After Dark Horrorfest 4 | Film Festival; Week of Jan 29th, 2010 | A ticket and nerves of steel

Who wouldn't want to see eight scary movies? Carlos the Intern apparently, since he's managed to miss every Horrorfest since its inception in 2006, but this time he says he's ready. Come the week of January 29, 2010, he'll join the legions of fright fans in most every major U.S. city as they head to select theaters to check out eight indie horror "films to die for." Unless, of course, Carlos wusses out again.



#### What is Bothering Carl? | Interactive Book | \$9.99

Everything comes full circle, and whereas Where the Wild Things Are has Roger reminiscing about childhood monster stories, the interactive book What is Bothering Carl? might prove a more appealing alternative for next-gen kids. The charming tale of Carl the Cyclops-whose laid back attitude is disrupted by a single nuisance-is easy for kids to navigate and builds vocabulary and reading skills. It's a comforting counterbalance to Roger's five-year-old son's predilection for developing ninja assassin skills. Nervous gamer parents should check out Storyfort.com.



# ENTER THE WORLD. IGNITE THE WAR.

Engage in a massive conflict between two worlds

Use weapons ranging from futuristic firehower to massive creatures

Play as both Na'vi and human

DUCTS RANGE FROM EVERYONE 10+ 10 TEEN



Mild Language Mild Suggestive Themes Violence Animated Blood

SRE CONTENT RATING www.emb.arg

varies and one of Ameter": The Game © 2000 twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation. Genre Software excluding Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation elements: © 2009 Ubisoft Entertainment. All Rights Reserved. James Cameron's Avatar": The Game, James Cameron's Avatar" and the Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation. Licensed to Ubisoft Entertainment by Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation. Licensed to Ubisoft Entertainment by Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation. Dissort, Usin Corporation Ubisoft Century Fox Film Century Fox F

JAMES CAMERON E

# AVATAR

THEGAME

COMING TO ALL NEXT-GEN PLATFORMS, HANDHELDS, AND PC DECEMBER 2009

WWW.AVATARMOVIEGAME.COM







## Previews -

First Look | Hands-On | In-Depth



PS3 P

▼ This bat-like boss is

your Cross Blade to

to the Zelda serie

actually defeated using

face, in an obvious nod

Kratos' brutality. Zelda's open world. Portal's qun...this isn't just a simple God of War clone

PS3 AVAILABLE: January 5, 2010 GENRE: Action PUBLISHER: THO DEVELOPER: Vigil Games

he apocalypse has come and gone—we're talking the actual, Biblical Apocalypse: archangels, boiling seas, demons, earthquakes and all—and the clashing armies of Heaven and Hell have done the Monster Mash all over

human cities have been equal parts irreparably smashed, burnt to a crisp, and infected with the sinister. twisted spires of widespread. large-scale demonic architecture. And War, one of the dreaded Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, has shown up for duty only to discover that A) the whole Apocalyptic shooting match started early and is long over, B) none of his fellow horsemen seem to have punched in at all, C) he alone seems to have been set up patsy-style as the Fall Guy Who Prematurely Triggered Armageddon™, and D) he is now being hunted

the planet. The formerly populated

worldwide for same, by forces both celestial and infernal. Well, crap. What's a guy named War to do? Hit the library for some patient, meticulous research? Not exactly. It's time to mount up, kick some ass, take some names—and write them all down in the Book of Revelation.

#### A War to end all Wars

Though he's still a huge, hulking, armor-clanking badass-with a gargantuan, twin-tipped sword that would give Final Fantasy VII's hero Cloud an inferiority complex-War starts out stripped of most of his gear and powers (punishment for supposedly causing Armageddon). He's also missing his horse Ruin entirely, though the trusty flame-hoofed steed does show up later. However, even weakened, he's adept at running, jumping, clambering along ledges and struts, interacting with devices and non-player charactersand of course, wreaking goresoaked vengeance upon foes sent from both Heaven and Hell.

Speaking of vengeance, Darksiders doesn't waste any time getting you right into the sinew-cleaving



22 | Holiday 2009



# Darksiders doesn't do "little." But believe it or not, War demolishes this towering boss so felt sorry for it

Funny as Hell

Believe it or not, there are a few characters in Darksiders who aren't hell-bent on destroying openly, at any rate. Early on, you meet Ulthane: a lumbering, troll-like, man-mountain of muscle and attitude with the voice and swagger of an R-rated Shrek. When battle angels invade the earthly ruins Ulthane calls home, he challenges War to a competition to see who can slaughter more "pigeons" in a set amount of time, and snarkily narrates the whole conflict. Who knew post-apocalyptia was going to be funny?



Darksiders' combat system also features an ever-filling Wrath meter. which operates rather like most games' rage meters, but with a very large, very demonic twist. When War maxes out the gauge, he can employ special moves and attacks. including temporarily morphing into a massive, winged demon flowing with molten energy. There's nothing quite like suddenly, transforming into an oversized terror composed

entirely of (un)holy fire.

#### **Apocalyptic Arsenal**

Beyond War's gargantuan sword and massive steel gauntlets (which can smash crystalline barriers. revealing new paths and treasures) you can steal an unwieldy but immensely powerful handheld cannon named Redemption from a fallen foe and use it to mow down

your feathery enemies. Then there's the Cross Blade, which acts like something flung out of Krull by way of the Zelda-series' Hyrule Kingdom. It's a four-bladed, Batarangtype monster shuriken that can strike multiple enemies in one shot, carry a payload (such as a bomb or flame) to a target, or strike and continue to grind away at a target, keeping the enemy pinned at a distance even as it chews away at their life-bar, It's fantastic.

And hey-if things get really desperate, you can always just start chucking wrecked automobiles at your opponents, or ripping lamp-posts right out of the concrete and clobbering any nearby troublemakers with them. Sure, it's not terribly elegant, but as anyone who's played a Hulk

"We had to hit one twostory, magmavomiting. toad/bat/ lizard-thingy's soft tummy five times... with a train."

action. Within minutes of starting the game, we were double-tap slashing demon foes into gibbetty ribbons, making nigh-seamless combos and executing God of Warstyle single-tap, slow-mo finishing moves on weakened opponents when the Circle-button icon appears over their doomed little heads, It's not as complex a melee system as the one in, say, Batman: Arkham Asylum-but it has essentially the same badass sense of satisfying. effortless fluidity.

Ditto that sense of badass when you simply snatch some annoying little flappy-winged demonic nuisance out of the air and snap its twiggy little neck. Or when you grab the face of a foe with your gauntleted fist and just sort of squeeze, until his head pulps in a tomato-v burst of blood and brains. We were still doing that three-and-a-half hours and dozens, maybe hundreds of fallen enemies into the game-it just never got old.







Four Horsemen or more Horsemen?

PS3 P

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse are described in Revelation, the last book of the Bible, However, only one. Death, is called by name Scholars typically refer to the other three as War, Famine, and Conquest (sometimes Pestilence), but Darksiders is obviously taking some liberties here and there-guns, for instance, aren't exactly Biblical. Thus far, publisher THQ is staying silent on the other three horsemen, but check out these bits of concept art, labeled "Strife" (the man) and "Fury" (the lady with the bullwhip). Could these be War's



The useful Cross Blade isn't the only thing that brings to mind Nintendo's seminal Zelda-series. Darksiders has an open world, with a hub area and six main "dungeons" that you can explore in almost any order. As players are introduced to new game mechanics they'll also encounter some sprawling, distinctly (and unapologetically) Zelda-esque environmentally-based ouzeles.

In one cavernous subway terminal filled with train-switching platforms, we got stuck trying to unclog the exit door. We were frustrated enough to punch a railcar or two-until we discovered that War can do exactly that, to great effect. And in more than one instance, we found the Cross Blade indispensable in transferring flame from one distant object to another, just like a certain elf's boomerang. You'll find yet another Zelda echo in an item called the Abyssal Chain-it's a sort of zip-line that can grapple War onto larger foes or higher perches...or drag small, unsuspecting victims toward you or into the air for some creative, juggling abuse.

#### **Epic Proportions**

One thing that doesn't look like anything from another game is the art design, which springs directly from the mind of Creative Director, comic writer/artist Joe Madureira. Everything in the post-Apocalypse

world is darkly beautiful, overwhelmingly detailed, and satisfyingly chunky, from the massive, central, demonic Tower ever looming on the horizon, down to the scaly skin of the smallest individual combatant. Even single characters and relatively minor battles in Darksiders are epic in their look and presentation, so you can just imagine how things get when the boss monsters start showing up.

Ironically labeled "The Chosen Ones," the big-bads in *Darksiders* are just the worst news imaginable: Building-sized, horned, membrane-winged,

him trash-talking the entire time, though.

that even their vulnerable spots are a challenge. Case in point: in order to exploit one two-story, magmavomiting, toad/bat/lizard-thingy's soft tummy, we had to hit it five or six times...with a train.

Then came the crazy moment. Our demoer took the controller and said he wanted to show us something nobody had ever seen before. What was it? A new weapon unlocked late in the game: a gun that shoots one orange hole and one blue one, which are connected. Yep. It was the Portal gun. In fact. it's even more robust, because you can shoot a hole and then fire through the opening it makes to place your second hole. Or, you can supercharge the holes so they'll rocket you out with added energy. as if you'd dropped in from a tremendous height.

At this point, we've seen lots of God of War and Zelda, some Hulk, and even some Portal in Darksiders' design. But it's important to note that Darksiders doesn't feel like a copycat. Why not? Because the devs are borrowing great ideas and implementing them beautifully. A good idea done well is fun even if you didn't think of it first. You'll hear no complaints from us. In fact, we can't wait for January 5th, so we can see what other game elements survived the end of the world.

Chris Hudak



EXPLORE THE NARUTO SHIPPUDEN ADVENTURE IN THE PALM OF YOUR HANDS!

WHIM. NARLHOSHIPPUDENLEGENDS: COM.

IN STORES NOW!



NEW MODES, MISSIONS AND HIDDEN CHARACTERS



30 BATTLES BRING THE SHIPPUDEN STORY TO LIFE!



ENGAGE IN WIRELESS AD HOC BATTLES WITH A PRIEMD!



















▲ After the death of plastic surgeon Dr. Steinman in the original game, Splicers got much, much uglier.

#### We dive deeply into the new Rapture

PS3 AVAILABLE, February 9, 2010 GENRE: First-Person Shooter PUBLISHER: 2K Games DEVELOPER: 2K Marin, 2K Australia, Digital Extremes, and 2K China Studios

he first BioShock is a beloved RPG-Infused first-person shooter whose unique style and flexible gameplay won millions of gamers' hearts. BioShock 2 claims it can retain that love. How? By continuing the story, casting the player as the first game's darkly iconic cover boy—the diving suit-clad Big Daddy—and adding online multiplayer. In short. BioShock 2 has

been billed as newer, better, and more awesome. Is that possible? We grabbed a controller and diving helmet to seek out the answer.

#### Sugar Daddy

BioShock 2 takes place 10 years after the original story, and the single-player campaign puts players into the boots of the very first prototype Big Daddy. Initially, it may seem the only real differences between you and Jack, the first game's hero, are visual: you'll see through a wide glass helmet and a giant drill protrudes from your right hand. However, as one of the most dominant characters from the original game, Big Daddies are heavily equipped with brute strength, thick armorplating, the aforementioned drill, spear guns (which, like a thumbtack to a grocery list, pin enemies to walls), and rivet guns-all of which are upgradeable. In other words, although you are a bit smaller and quicker than the production model

Big Daddies (though still larger and slower than Jack), you're loaded for bear right from the get-go.

To balance your extra power, once-normal humans who've junked up on too much Adam have evolved into deadlier foes too. You'll soon encounter this new generation of enemies, the first being a big, muscular Brute Splicer, Think of him as a two-legged rhino. He charges and rams you, dealing heavy damage, 2K Marin has promised he's the first of many more undisclosed new Splicers. You'll also confront the game's new nemesis, the Big Sister, a much faster, more powerful female (but totally unsexy, in case you were wondering) version of yourself.

Creative Director Jordan Thomas demoed "Siren Alley," a mission that takes place in Rapture's dangerous red light district. Here, you confront the first upgraded model of Big Daddy, called the Rumbler. This defensive strategist, when attacked, quickly sets up automatic turrets around his Little Sister, hangs back, and shoots from behind his wall of fire. We also played the humorously designed propaganda mission "Journey to the Surface," which







features a dark amusement park designed to prevent kids from ever wanting to leave Rapture. Throughout the experience, the series' trademark retro-decayed atmosphere and dynamic combat were fully intact. No drop-off there.

#### Multiplayer: No Scuba Gear allowed

BioShock 2's multiplayer game is all about combat. Intelligently integrated into the Rapture's storyline, the multiplayer game takes place in 1959, one full year before the events in the first BioShock. Interestingly, that means you'll play through modified maps taken from the first game, such as fan-favorite Fort Frolic (which we played and loved).

Just like the single-player campaign, the multiplayer mode rewards players with cumulative growth. The more kills and various minichallenges you complete while playing, the more Adam you earn. which in turn unlocks more weapons, armor, upgrades, plasmids, and tonics. The challenges include things you're likely to do anyway, but provide a little extra incentive and focus, like killing a bunch of Big Daddies, hacking turrets, or taking snapshots of other players (which gives you a damage bonus against them), Smartly, the points you earn are attached to your profile, not your character, so the accumulation is perpetual.

Characters are fully customizable with party masks, rabbit ears, and hand-held weapons like candlesticks and trophies, and once you've tweaked your character's outward appearance, you'll customize three pre-set weapon/plasmid loadouts. Unlike the single-player game, multiplayer permits only two weapons, two plasmids, and three tonics at any given time. But this leads to



tremendously varied strategies and character builds, and you can switch your loadout at any time to better suit

the fight.

Multiplayer consists of five game modes. Survival of the Fittest and Civil War—which splits players into five-on-five teams—are basically Deathmatch modes. Capture the Sister is an interesting variation on Capture the Flag in which one team protects a little sister and the other seeks to kidnap her. Interestingly, while most modes involve Splicers, Capture the Flag spawns one defensive player as a Big Daddy, which makes sense. Turf War is basically

King of the Hill, and Adam Grab is much like it sounds—a free-for-all to collect Adam rather than kills.

BioShock 2's multiplayer game is a blast. The beautiful environments retain the enclosed sense of gloom and dread from the single-player game, and the five-on-five team games create an addictive cohesiveness. We're not quite ready to say BioShock 2 is as amazing as the first game, but we've got to admit that so far, the sequel is expanding upon the premise without sacrificing a thing. And that has us eager to put on the bubble hat and drill to get this pool party started. Bouglass C. Perry









Hands-on with four naked snakes...Wait, what?

PSP AVAILABLE: 2010 GENRE: Stealth Action PUBLISHER: Konami DEVELOPER: Kojima Productions

fter preventing global thermonuclear war in Metal Gear Solid 3 and MGS: Portable Ops, Naked Snake is back again in Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker. Naturally, the name is all-wrong—peace is about the last thing our one-eyed friend is going to find. Bad for him. Great for us

The game begins with a quick tutorial. Snake is in Columbia training recruits for his freelance military Militaires Sans Frontières, (Soldiers Without Borders)—a play on the reallife organization, Médecins Sans Frontières, AKA Doctors Without Borders. As Snake spars with his soldiers, you learn the basic controls.

At this point, you select a control type. We chose "Shooter" type, which is similar to the controls of *Metal Gear Solid 4* on the PS3 (movement is controlled by the PSP's analog nub). The L-button shepherds the camera into a *Resident Evil 5*-style over-the-shoulder view, while the R-button fires.

The camera is controlled with the face buttons. Tapping down on the D-pad will cause Snake to crouch or hold down to go prone, while left and right on the D-pad grant access to equipment and weapons, respectively. There's a second control layout as well, but it mimics the controls of the HUGE-in-Japan-but-ignored-here Monster Hunter series, so it'll be most U.S. players' second choice.

#### **Drilling for Snake**

After Snake finishes drilling his soldiers, he is informed by Kazuhira Miller (Master Miller from the first Metal Gear Solid) that he has a visitor. A professor from Costa Rica named Gálvez has come to ask for help. An unknown armed force has infiltrated Costa Rica, a nation without a military, and the professor seems to believe it's CIA-related. Snake's not interested.

That's when Gálvez's 16-year-old student, Paz, steps in to lay on the puppy-dog eyes. She tells Snake how she was kidnapped and tortured at a young age and extols the virtues of peace and Costa Rica's pacifist constitution. Snake holds steady, but caves when it's revealed that Gálvez knows Snake is Big Boss. Time to head over to Costa Rica to investigate the mysterious militia. and also Gálvez.



remove and capture enemy soldiers from the battlefield by slowly dragging them back to a truck. It was very inconvenient. For Peace Walker, Kojima Productions has added the "Fulton air recovery

In Portable Ops, Snake could

system." Snake simply crouches balloon to him, and watches him float away. The ability to remove enemies from the battlefled implies that the game will include multicharacter team-building mechanics from MPO. However, when asked directly whether such elements would be in the came, a Kolima

Productions representative said,

Bris - Miller Hollo Car S.



Get Loaded

BATTLE DRESS

lot of damage.

SNEAKING SUIT

A stealth suit combined ; with a riot shield. This loadout is for people who

are sneaky and don't want to deal a lot of damage. JUNGLE FATIGUES A balanced camo set.

Go shirtless and crazy. This loadout is fast and

has tons of weapons. For

the enemy Rambo-style.

those who want to take on

A heavily armored and

loud suit. For players who

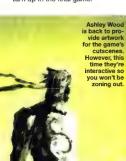
want to take and deal out a



Players can share weapons. A heavily armed partner can provide a weaker, stealthier counterpart with bigger guns.

To a single player, Peace Walker feels much like a standard Metal Gear game: a military actioner with open environments that can be tackled through stealth or combat. For those who prefer Metal Gear nonlethal and sneaky, there's the ability to tranquilize enemies and sneak by them while camouflaged. For those who like to run-and-gun, there's plenty of ammo and assault rifles. New Close-Quarters Combat (CQC) options enable a mixed approach. With the ability to throw enemies into each other and consecutively combo grappling moves, it's possible to dispatch half-a-dozen enemies in seconds without firing a shot.

As fun as sneaking around alone is, the real heart of Peace Walker is the multiplayer mode. Every mission in our demo was playable by a single player or cooperatively as a two-to-four-man multiplayer squad. In the demo, everyone played as Snake, However, at the outset of the mission, you can choose between pre-set equipment loadouts (see sidebar) that add a bit of variety. We expect a few more characters will turn up in the final game.





#### "As fun as sneaking around alone is, the real heart of Peace Walker is the multiplayer mode."

Co-op partners can aid each other in numerous novel ways. For example, as long as the players are within a certain distance, they can share weapons. Players must be careful not to get too far away from each other. If they do, the ability to share is cut, and they have to get right next to each other to sync up again.

#### Don't press Start to skip

Cutscenes are infamously integral to the Metal Gear franchise, but Peace Walker gives you several good reasons to watch them. Some are in-engine and some are pre-rendered animatics, done in digital comic-style much like the Metal Gear Solid digital graphic novels. Both types are much more interactive than ever before. For example: at certain points, players will be able to scroll over the artwork in the scene and find hidden Easter

Eggs. During our demo, we were able to see through the clothes of a certain female character and view her in various states of undress.

That's not entirely new, but there's more: In another cutscene, Snake shot down a helicopter using a missile. Even though the scene was composed entirely of artwork, the aiming and firing of the missile was completely player controlled. Even more shockingly, the codec screen we all spent so many hours staring at is gone. Instead, all of Snake's communication with his team is conducted in real-time.

It's clear that this is no mere portable spin-off, but we'll have to wait until 2010 too see if it's truly worthy of being considered Metal Gear Solid 5.







▲ Gran Turismo 5 continues the series tradition of being a graphical powerhouse.

#### Gentlemen, start your engines...

PS3 AVAILABLE: TB0 2010 GENRE: Orlving PUBLISHER: SCEA DEVELOPER: Polyphony Digital

t's hard to believe it's been four years since *Gran Turismo 4* came out on PS2. Forza and other hardcore racing sims have raised the bar incredibly high during the interim years, but after our hands-on time at September's Tokyo Game Show, we expect *Gran Turismo 5* will have little trouble retaining its head-of-the-pack position from the new competitors.

As expected, the game looks fantastic. The detail on each car is amazing and the game's updated cockpit view is especially pleasing to those who dislike exterior camera views. However, as good as the game looks, it's not the relative powerhouse that its predecessors were in

subtle but undeniably superior blend of smoothness and resolution. Gameplay is the proving grounds for the genre and the new game still features a level of realism and difficulty that the hardcore crowd will appreciate. If you're a longtime fan of the series or a true gearhead, you'll notice the handling of the cars themselves is actually superior to the already competent GT5 Prologue. It's that level of attention to finessing the precision and feel of the controls that distinguishes the Gran Turismo series, but at the same time, those

nuances often go unnoticed by

novice and casual driving game play-

ers. The one improvement that's sure

to please the hardcore and novices

alike is the damage modeling. No

longer will players be able to drive

around the track, slamming into cars

and walls, and finish the race with a

Turismo 3. GT3's graphics were so far ahead of the competition that it took years for comparable games to be released. Well, the years have passed and the starting grid is now filled with current and forthcoming competitors like GRID, Need for Speed SHIFT, and Blur, that will give Gran Turismo

their day, particularly the PS2's Gran

current and forthcoming competitors like GRID, Need for Speed SHIFT, and Blur, that will give Gran Turismo 5 a race for its money. But while the gap has closed, GT5 still looks to have the graphical edge with its subtle but undeniably superior blend of smoothness and resolution.

Gameplay is the proving grounds for the green and the surgeone.

car looking like it just rolled off the assembly line (see sidebar).

With no release date announced for North America, it's apparent that we'll have to wait at least until March 2010 for *Gran Turismo 5*. The game has been a long time coming, but it looks like it'll be worth the wait. 

Ryan Winterhaltt.



collisions. The tires became worn and

the bumper jiggled a little as damage

accrued, but we expected our ride to get torn up a bit more. The effect may still be

in the process of being tweaked or maybe

damage would have been more readily

but it remains to be seen how much

apparent if we drove more like a maniac.

impact the feature will have on gameplay.



I JUST DROPPED BY TO SAY DIE

COMING JANUARY 2010



"Best Action Game of E3."

BAYONETTA.COM



**Blood and Gore** Intense Violence Partial Nudity Strong Language Suggestive Themes



XBOX 360, XBOX

















▲ Planes, helicopters, automobiles... The number of vehicle types you can commandeer in JC2 is simply astounding.

#### Laws of physics need not apply

PS3 AVAILABLE: 2010 GENRE: Action PUBLISHER: Eidos/Warner Bros. Int. Ent. 0EVELOPER: Avalanche Studios

magine launching a motorcycle off the bow of a ship that's
wrecked on a mountain top,
ditching the bike during a thousandfoot freefall, then deploying the
parachute that's permanently
strapped to your back to glide
majestically down to a tropical
beach. That's the essence of Just
Cause 2. Well, that, and creating as
much chaos as you possibly can...
seriously.

You can deploy your chute any time you're sufficiently far off the ground...so all you have to do is grapple any nearby tall object.

Sure, there's a thin veneer of story trying desperately to contain the unrelenting action-movie bravado (something about locating a former mentor who's disappeared with a truckload of money and intel), but as the developers put it, "chaos is the currency for progression." In order to unlock the main story missions and advance through the game, you must literally fill a "chaos meter" by wreaking havoc in any manner you choose-from forcibly capturing enemy strongholds to performing odd jobs for any of the island's three rebel gangs to assassinating any number of pre-designated targets.

Since JC2 is an open-world game, you can also simply choose to explore and destroy designated "chaos objects," take on race chalenges to earn cash, or, if all else fails, just start blowing things up at random until the army comes to stop you. There's really no limit or pattern to the ways in which you can approach the game, and considering that Panau—the politically unstable

South Pacific island where the game is set—contains 400 square miles of densely-packed terrain and more than 100 hijackeble vehicles, you're going to have a hard time running out of things to blow up.

#### Explosions in the sky

But let's face it: you're not visiting Panau for its sun-soaked beaches and lush tropical jungles. You're here for the action. We recently had a chance to get our hands on JC2, and rest assured, our playtime saw the laws of physics defied in ways we can barely describe.

Our first mission sent us up the side of a remote mountain to a communications facility that could aid us in locating an informant. This entailed hijacking a helicopter, which—in addition to providing a convenient and responsive mode of transportation—gave us a chance to admire the game's visuals. And admire we did: the geographical diversity, realistic detail, and vast draw-distance were truly impressive.

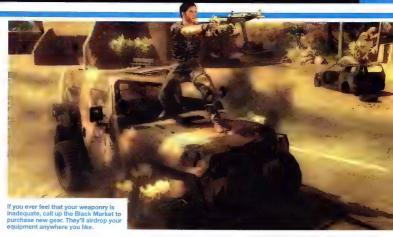


Once we reached the base, we bailed out of the chopper midflight, letting it crash gloriously into an unlucky tower as we deployed our parachute and floated effortlessly over the ensuing explosion. And note that the parachute in Just Cause 2 is far from ordinary. Using the analog sticks, you can actually lose or gain altitude and steer yourself wherever you like. Basically, in a limited sense, you can fly, and though it definitely requires some practice and the camera can be tricky, this becomes especially handy when used in tandem with your other major tool; the grapple.

Unlike the original Just Cause, the grapple is now permanently attached to your arm to be utilized at any time and can attach to absolutely anything-buildings, vehicles, people, you name it. (See the We're Hooked sidebar for a few creative uses.) When you're floating around with your parachute open, you can grapple objects in the environment (including the ground) to pull yourself around, providing momentum when needed. Both of these tools are open to you from the start of the game and are an integral part of the JC2 experience.

#### Chute to kill

After grappling and gliding around the base—occasionally dropping explosives and picking off careless enemies with our submachine gun—we hit the ground and got to work. And by "work" we mean "killing bad guys." The action is decidedly run-and-gun as enemies can sustain



an impressive amount of damage before keeling over, but so can hero Rico Rodriguez—aithough health regeneration is limited and the more damage you sustain, the less you'll be able to recover.

More importantly, though, you can dual-wield an Uzi and a sawed-off shotgum...and fire them independently. It's amazingly fun, and the audio and visual effects—like gunfire and opponent animations—prove strong enough to make each firefight a gratifying experience. There's no auto-targeting system, but there is an "aim assist" that guides your weapons towards their targets. Needless to say, you'll do more damage if you actually place the reticule over an enemy, but the

assist mechanic melds so seamlessly into gameplay that you'll just think you're an amazing shot.

Once we finished wasting enemy soldiers and actually recovered the location of the informant, a friendly chopper dropped by to take us to him. In true action-movie style, Rico clung to the bottom of the helicopter as it soared down the mountain and began tailing a four-car convoy. At this point, we grappled our way down to the last car and assumed a "stunt position." Basically. any time you're in or on a vehicle, you can hit a button to, say, ride the hood or cling to the grill or assume any number of other positions, It's all very Indiana Jones.

As the convoy continued to barrel down the road at full speed, we picked off occupants as they emerged to fire on us and grappled our way to the front car where our informant was being held captive. Then, from the roof of the car, we pulled the driver out of the vehicle, commandeered it for ourselves, and careened off into the desert to meet up with the faction that hired us.

That's Just Cause 2: gravitydefying parachutes, arm-mounted
grappling guns, and easily executed
action-movie stunts all within the
context of an open-world shooter.
The controls felt solid throughout and
the graphics certainly impress, so if
the game's other technical and
design aspects hold up, this is could
be one memorable experience.

Scott Butterworth



Thanks to its impossibly strong cables and incredibly generous range, Just Cause 2's grappling gun proves to be a very versatile little tool. If you shoot a solid object, you'll automatically be pulled towards and then attached to that object. If you shoot a person, that person will be pulled towards you as if you were Scorpion from Mortal Kombat. And if you shoot a grapple into anything at all and then continue to hold down the button while you aim at something else, the two objects will be tethered together (and if you like, you can hit the button again to release the tether). Considering all these ontions, there are some truly creative uses for your grapple...if you've got a cruel enough mind.

#### HERE ARE OUR FAVORITES SO FAR.

- » Pull a guard down from a tower (simple but useful)
- » Pull an enemy toward you then
- shoot him out of midair

  "Tether an enemy to an exploding barrel "then shoot the barrel to
- launch him into the sky

  Tether an enemy to the rotating
  blade of a windmill
- » Tether two helicopters together for a midair collision



You can assume a "stunt position"—like standing on the roof of a moving car, for instance—anytime you're in a vehicle by simply hitting one of the face buttons.

### PlayStation Gallery Updates, sneak peeks, works-in-progress









### Dead Rising 2 Update

PS3 AVAILABLE: T80 2010 GENRE: Act on PUBLISHER: Capcom GEVELOPER, Blue Castle

Congratulations—you're the latest contestant on the slauphter-happy game show "Terror is Reality"... otherwise known as *Dead Rising 2*'s totally kickass multiplayer mode. Basically, up to three friends and you will compete to see who can kill the most zombies in a variety of gruesome ways: riding a motorcycle that has channaws strapped to the sides, wearing a helment that sports a pair of razor sharp mose antiers, running around in a human-sized, zombie-crushing hamster ball...you get the idea. Sure it sounds totally ridiculous (and awasome), but bare in mind that this Is just the multiplayer. The story mode—which follows former motocross champ Chuck Greene as he searches for his daughter in a zombie-infested Las Vegas-style city—promises to be significantly more serious... or at least slightly more serious. Scott Butterworth

## Fat Princess: Fistful of Cake First Look

PSP AVAILABLE: TBD GENRE: Action
PUBLISHER: SCEA DEVELOPER: SuperVillain Studios

We've got good news and bad news. The good news is that the hit PSN title Fat Princess is waddling over to the PSP and bringing it's framite, twisted take on Capture the Flag with it. The bad news? Online play only supports five character classes and up to eight players, down from six classes and 32 players on the console version. But don't be too bummed In Fisths of Cake, you can swap character classes at any time just by grabbing a new hat (seriously), so even though you'll always be at least one class short of the full roster, you'll always have the characters you need. Plus, there's a plethor of new content, including six new battlefields, four new multiplayer modes, and an extended, story-driven single-player campaign. So the experience may be slightly miniatule-pad, but the joy of whacking your opponents with weapons and cramming your princess full of cake so she'll be harder to kidnays shouldn't be diminished. Scott Butterworth











# **Army of Two:** The 40th Day Hands-On

PSP AVAILABLE: January GENRE: Action PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts DEVELOPER: EA Montreal

Salem and Rios are going handheld, and though the game retains the "pivotal" elements of the PS3 version-like the local co-op and the disaster-in-Shanghai storyline-it's been adapted specifically for the PSP. Basically, it's an arcadey, side-scrolling shooter set in a 3D space...though it doesn't always scroll to the side. Much like the shooter games of yore, the camera is locked in a fixed position, but its position changes as you move through the level. However, no matter where the camera sits, each of the face buttons fires your weapon in a single dedicated direction. So if you hit Triangle, you shoot towards the top of the screen, and so on. Sounds a little wacky, sure, but our hands-on time proved that even wacky ideas can be tremendously fun...with a little acclimation. Scott Butterworth











## Valkyria Chronicles 2 First Look

PSP AVAILABLE: Summer 2010 GENRE: Strategy RPG PUBLISHER: Sega DEVELOPER: Sega

have been hoping for, Sega's Valkyria Chronicles is making its way onto the PSP as the obviously titled Valkyria Chronicles 2. Set in a fictional 1937 Europe. it follows a group of young students at the Lanseal Military Academy as they try to survive a civil war... and high school. The game is half strategy RPG and half high-school-life simulator. The developers have actually promised that players will have the chance to "experience every day school life." Despite the dating-sim-like mechanics of the school-life sections. the combat uses its own real-time/turn-based hybrid system to offer a ton of depth and strategic flexibility. and Valkyria's superb art style makes the transition to the PSP no worse for the wear. Ryan Winterhalter

Though not quite the next-gen sequel we may





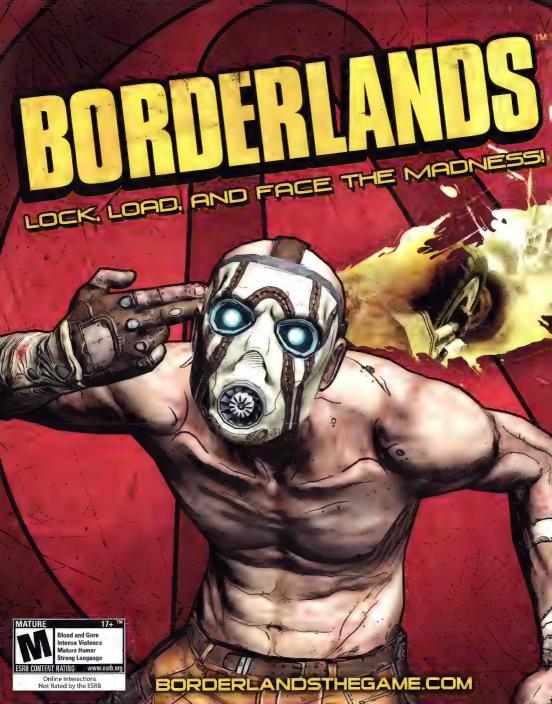
plus a ONEYEAR membership to GameFly®!



http://www.contests. gamesradar.com/gamefly



on 2009 GameRy, Inc. GAMEFLY and the GF of GameFly, Inc. All other marks used under lice owners. No purchase necessary. Must be a reside in the 50 United States or DC to ent please visit contests.gamesradar c



# "BORDÉRLANDS IS GOING TO ABSOLUTELY KNOCK YOU ON YOUR ASS."

# "THIS ROLE-PLAYING SHOOTER WILL TURN HEADS!"



GET READY for the MIND-BLOWING INSANITY, as one of FOUR TRIGGER-HAPP WILDENA TAKING OUT EVERYTHING THAT STANDS IN YOUR WAY.

- RPS (Role Playing Shooter) Combines frantic first-person shooting action with accessible role-playing character progression.
- CO-OP FRENZY: Fly solo in single player or drop in and out with up to 4 Player Co-Op online and offline for a maniacal multiplayer experience.
- BAZILLIONS OF GUNS: Gun lust fulfilled with rocket-launching shotguns, enemy-torching revolvers, SMGs that fire lightning rounds, and tons more.











XBOX 360 2













# reed | We peer beneath the assassin's cowl to discover his true face PlayStation The Official Magazine Editors' Choice BY SCOTT BUTTERWORTH

Desmond Miles. A man with centuries of history crashing through his veins, who watches the lives of his ancestors flash before his eyes in a machine that revives dormant memories that are written into his genetic code. He watched as two-faced preachers and soulless politicians ransacked the Holy Land during the Third Crusade, He witnessed the earliest days of a secret war that rages even to the present day between two sacred orders-the Templars and the Assassins-that seek to influence the fate of the world through murder and deceit. And now he's set to experience the life of another ancestor, Ezio Auditore, an Italian nobleman determined to avenge the death of his family. From the streets of Florence to the canals of Venice (and beyond), we followed Miles on his epic journey through betrayal and retribution. And now that we've seen the past, we're ready to illuminate the present...



## **BLOOD TIES**

Alright, so you probably know that Assassin's Creed Riondines-a PSP title that continues to follow Altair after the events of first game-hits store shelves the same day as Assassin's Creed II, but did you know that you'll be able to synch the two games and unlock special items in both? That's right. simply load up both games, connect your PSP to your PS3 via USB cable, and select "Connectivity" from the Extras menu in ACII In the PS3 game, you'll receive the weapons of the bosses you've defeated in Bloodlines (up to six, if you earn them all), as well as cash for every special coin you've collected. In the PSP game, you'll receive additional bars on your health meter and upgrades for your hidden blade, including the welladvertised wrist nistni and

Assassin's Creed II and the original Assassin's Creed are two remarkably different games. The sequel retains the historical roots, fluid free-running, and brutal assassinations that made the first game such a unique and refreshing (though occasionally tedious and repetitive) experience. But with an entirely new hero, setting, and gameplay focus, the whole game just feels different-which isn't necessarily a bad thing. In fact, the sequel has arguably changed for the better in just about every conceivable way, starting with the most basic element of all: the protagonist.

Altair Ibn La-Ahad-the arrogant,

# the sequel has arguably changead for the better in just about every conceivable way

insufferable assassin with the mexplicable American accent who spent most of the Third Crusade picking off various historical figures - is out. In his place, we have Ezio Auditore da Firenze, a brash, occasionally overconfident, yet charming and sincere Italian aristocrat who's immediately more likable than his ancestor.

Naturally, mild-mannered bartender



Desmond Miles returns, but following

a somewhat clumsy (albeit necessary)

opening-gameplay segment that picks

up immediately after the last game's

spend almost no time in the present

cliffhanger "ending," you'll actually

day (yeah, we were relieved too).

and familial genocide, Ezio decides to don his father's assassin's robe and do what any good videogame badass does in this situation; get even. Of course, when he discovers that his father was murdered in service of a much larger conspiracy, he's left with quite a lot of "getting even" to do.



an armguard for blocking.



Fortunately for Ezio, Assassin's Creed II sports an impressive collection of helpful side characters, including several that you don't kill: Paola. the head mistress of a popular brothel who teaches you the art of deception; your uncle Marlo, who trains you in armed combat: Leonardo da Vinci (at least a slick, young version of him), who serves as your support crew throughout the game. None of the characters leave a truly lasting impression (except maybe da Vinci. who's a real pal), but it's refreshing to interact with each new personality as they pass through Ezio's life and subtly drive the story forward, especially since the voice acting is top notch all around. Plus, meeting famous historical figures like the Medicis and participating in real historical events is just plain cool.

Perhaps the only drawback of this whole elaborate setup is that fact that Ezio is not an assassin from the beginning of the game. In fact, it took us nearly four hours just to get a sword. To be fair, AC II is a seriously long game, so in a relative sense, four hours actually isn't that much time, but we couldn't help but feel a little

frustrated by this very deliberate pacing, even if it is in service of the story.

Still, once the story actually starts to pick up steam, it never looks back, and the strong characters and compelling setting guide you through a deep, involving adventure that winds throughout Italy, stopping every now and then for a massive "Holy crap!" moment. Even the ending-which takes a serious turn for the bizarre and unapologetically announces another sequel-proves far more satisfying than the painfully abrupt finale of the first game.

#### MAN ON A MISSION

But most importantly, the narrative actually drives the events of the game this time. Sounds obvious, sure, but it means you'll kill men for atrocities you've actually witnessed (or at least heard them admit to committing), rather than crossing off anonymous names on a list your boss gave you, as it worked in the last game. From surreptitiously scaling a series of towers to storming a fortress with an army of mercenaries, you encounter each assassination target under a unique set of circumstances that emerge organically from the preceding events.

This certainly adds some welcome variety, but it also means many of these assassinations aren't really assassinations anymore: no stalking your prey, no creeping in for a quick, clean kill. Instead, the killings tend to be more violent and action-oriented.

Don't worry, Solid Snake fans, you'll be able to work your stealth skills PlayStation. The Official Magazine

▲ Just like the first game, you climb to the top of the city's high est points in order to "synch" with the map and reveal new items and locations. And after enjoying the view for a while, you can go ahead and dive off.



# the Italian Renaissance—a truly inspired and captivating setting that no other game has even attempted

into certain scenarios throughout the game; the stealth elements haven't been eliminated entirely, the focus has merely shifted...mainly to kicking ass, assassin-style. But this new approach does mean that the information gathering missions of the original game no longer make sense. You're not really going to need to track your target if you're watching him violently murder a nobleman in front of a church, right? Instead, AC II adopts a mission system very similar to that of Grand Theft Auto: as you play, new side-missions that you can access at any time will appear throughout the city, and most missions are straight to the point and directly advance the storyline.

In Venice, for instance, you spend one mission aiding an ally who's injured during a raid on an unfriendly base. First, you must fend off hordes of enemy soldier as she limps through the streets and then you have to





protect her gondola from archers as another ally rows her to safety. Though the underlying objectives are typically simple-in this case, "kill these dudes and don't let your friend die"-the fact that each mission serves a unique purpose within the context of the story keeps everything feeling fresh.

You'll notice a few repeating mission types (following a conspirator without being noticed or collecting people or items from three different locations are popular choices), but even these never grow repetitive enough to be grating. Plus, you occasionally do something totally different and crazy...like soar over Venice using da Vinci's makeshift flying contraption.

#### GOING MEDIEVAL

Much like the mission system, AC II's reworked fighting mechanics focus on eliminating the oft-maligned repetitiveness of the first game's combat. No, it's not suddenly God of War-the combat definitely still has its own unique rhythm-but you're presented with a slew of fresh options including a huge arsenal of new weapons. If you want to simply hammer on the attack button and watch your enemies kneel before your might, you can carry a battle-axe or war hammer as your primary weapon, both of which tend to deal impressive damage even when your enemies are blocking.

If you're a little more patient like us. though, you can stick with a sword and rely on the new, deeper counterattack system; hold block until your opponent makes a move, then time your attack to deal a devastating, cinematic execution. And if you pull the same trick while unarmed. you can actually disarm the enemy and then dispatch him with his own blade. Discovering each brutal new execution is (for some sick reason) fantastically fun, and thankfully, each weapon has several different kill animations built in, so it'll take a while to see them all. Plus, you can pick up and temporarily use any weapon lying around the battlefield, and more importantly, you can purchase entirely new weapons.

As with most in-game economies, you now earn money by completing missions, looting the dead, scouring the map for hidden chests, and, eventually, improving your "safe house," which is actually your uncle's swanky villa in the countryside. You can use that cash to purchase the new and upgraded weapons that you gradually unlock, or to buy armor, which is the primary method of

permanently increasing your health bar. You can also buy medicine from doctors, pay to have your clothes dyed at a tailor, or purchase art to improve the value of your safe house.

It may not sound like a big deal, but the economic system is impressively well balanced; you never have enough cash for the system to feel meaningless. but you're never forced to scrape together loose change either. And upgrading your gear is an immensely satisfying process. We can't explain it. but there's just something about unlocking a shiny new sword that makes us feel all warm and fuzzy.

And new weapons aren't just satisfying-they're useful. Because in addition to the array of new weapon types, there are new enemy types to face: Brutes, as the name implies, are massive, heavily armored soldiers who are slow but incredibly powerful, and Seekers, by contrast, are lightly armored but fast enough to keep up with Ezio...even if he runs. In both cases, standard tactics just won't cut it and you'll be forced to explore new avenues of destruction: dodges. disarms, special attacks...whatever works. Even run of the mill soldiers wielding more usual weapons-like long spears or large, two-handed swords-must be dealt with in new, creative ways, which always helps to keep combat feeling fresh, exciting, and, most importantly, fun.

#### ON THE RUN

Of course, if you don't feel like fighting, AC II has also added a bunch of options that help you avoid direct conflict. Our favorite? The three new stealth assassination techniques: while in a hiding spot (like a bail of

#### PICTURE PERFECT?

The cities of Assassin's Creed II are masterpieces unto themselves. Each one is dense, detailed, and completely open for exploration. The game isn't quite as visually polished as the original-observing a city from atop a "viewpoint" (any of a number of specific high points peppered throughout each city) generally reveals a little white fog rather than an immaculate draw distance, for example-but the crties are absolutely remarkable nonetheless, in part because they've been so carefully modeled after their actual, real-life counterparts. So how successful was the development team in recreating some of Italy's most famous landmarks? You be the judge.

#### SAINT MARK'S BASILICA





THE GRAND CANAL





THE RIALTO BRIDGE





▼ When you manage to ditch your pursuers, they'll continue to investigate the area surrounding your last known location. Of course, if they check your hiding spot, you can just pull them in for a quick kill.





▲ Though there's often not much there. you'll have plenty of countryside to explore. Enjoy the fresh air as you slaughter a few enemies with a hired mercenary.

▼ Most missions involve fairly standard objectives like protecting an ally or retrieving an item. But every

hay), grab an enemy and quickly pull him to his doom; while positioned above an enemy, lock-on for an easy one-button flying kill; or while hanging from a ledge, grab an enemy standing above you and hurl him to his death. Gruesome as it may sound, we could spend the entire game just running around the city throwing people from ledges and diving on them from above. It's just awesome.

Not all of Ezio's new moves are equally flashy, but some of them are

# you can actually disarm the enemy and then dispatch him with his own blade

just as useful: you can now blend into any crowd to avoid detection, or hire a group of courtesans, thieves, or mercenaries to distract, defend, or attack for you. You can also throw money to attract a crowd of peasants and slip



past your enemies in the ensuing chaos. You can even do the same thing with a dead body...though that's a little more disturbing. And should you ever get caught, you can throw a smoke bomb and do what Ezio does best: run.

Free-running really is the trademark of the Assassin's Creed games, and for good reason. Sprinting across rooftops, scaling immense towers, and traversing whole cities at will is an incredibly liberating feeling (even if you're just holding a couple buttons and allowing Ezio to do most of the work for you), and the fluid, natural animations are absolute works of art. No other game even comes close to this level of freedom of motion. And Ezio, it turns out, is an even better runner than his ancestor Altaïr. Not only can he can climb faster, he generally does a better job of finding places to pull himself up to-even if they aren't directly above him. Also, should you ever slip, simply press the Circle button when you're near a grabbable object to avoid a painful fall. And fortunately for all of us, the camera and the controls are generally very cooperative. We still



unintentionally hurled ourselves off a building a few times...but we're almost positive it was our fault.

The cities-in addition to being absolutely gorgeous and in most cases, larger than those in the first gameserve as amazingly well-designed playgrounds for your free-running, Each one features a unique architectural fingerprint and possesses a distinct atmosphere and personality that helps immerse you even deeper in the story. San Gimignano in the Tuscan country, for instance, is incredibly dense and mixes many of the game's shortest buildings with several of its tallest, whereas the structures in Venice are relatively tall, making quick escapes a

bit more tricky...unless you dive into the canals, AC II's environments directly influence gameplay in surprising and delightful ways, making the its freerunning more rewarding than ever.

#### LAST WORDS

Assassin's Creed II truly offers an experience like no other, one that mixes history and brutality to sheer perfection. And it's absolutely massive: it took us nearly 40 hours to make it through and we didn't even finish every optional mission-of which there are plenty (check out the sidebar). With the added combat variety, mission structure, in-game economy, and lengthy narrative, it's easy to feel a bit overwhelmed, but beneath the shiny new exterior, all

Venice absolutely never gets old. The splash sound effect is hilarious

the basic elements of an immensely compelling title are there: You still get to free-run through picturesque European cities. You still get to cross swords with unsuspecting guards. And you still get to sneakily assassinate famous historical figures. The game builds on all of these essential ingredients to smartly address every complaint raised against the first game and create an experience that feels not only deep but satisfyingly complete. It may not be the PS3's new savior, but it easily earns your \$60. Plus, you get two hidden blades this time. How do you argue with that?

▲ Throwing guards into the canals of

courier assignments, and "beat-ups."

themselves. You must locate strange symbols (the Glyphs) on specifically marked buildings in the world. Each symbol hides a new puzzle. Once you solve the puzzle, you'll receive a short video clip in a section of the Database ominously titled "The Truth," And the best part? All

SECRET LOCATIONS: These locations aren't related to the main story, but conquering all six will earn you a snazzy suit of armor. Plus, they're damn creative and fun. Essentially the goal of the locations is to get from point A to point B through a series of platforming-based puzzles, though each one has a slightly different take on the formula. The story campaign will lead you to the first one. but check your map for the other five



PlayStation. The Official Magazine

Assassin's Creed II's main story campaign is long, deep, and absolutely packed with things to do-and then there are the notional missions. And suddenly, the game seems like it's expanding into RPG territory. With so much to do, it can be tough to keep everything straight, so we've compiled a list of all the extra activities

FEATHERS: These tiny collectibles are essentially AC II's version of the original game's flags. However. unlike the flags, there are only 100 and you'll actually be rewarded for gathering them.

CODEX PAGES: These pages

are basically collectibles as well, but they play a far more important role in the game. You must earn or find a few select codex pages in specific ways; these pages will either grant you a new weapon or contribute to the story. The majority, however, are simply scattered throughout the world. Check your map to find them, and once you pick them up, be sure to read them in the Database menu screen for some intriguing backstory.

SIDE-MISSIONS: Think of

these missions as the Taxi

or Violante missions in Grand Theft Auto.

They're not related to

the story, but they can be

entertaining and will earn you

a bit of cash. Mission types include races, assassinations,

the puzzles hint at some deep. all-encompassing conspiracy.



# 12 Must-have PS3 Games

The latest and the greatest: Our picks for the hottest Holiday titles and 2009's top-rated games

## **Holiday Hotties**



Assassin's Creed II \$59.99 | Ubisoft Adventure in 15th century Italy and expenence a renaissance of stealth, intrigue, and assassination.



Ratchet & Clank Future: A Crack in Time \$59.99 | SCEA

The dynamic alien and robot duo returns in the latest installment of the nefariously excellent 3D platform series.



Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 \$59.99 | Activision

The mother of all combat games is back—prepare yourself for another two-year online multiplayer deployment.



Tekken 6 \$59.99 | Namco Bandai The first *Tekken* built for the PS3: 40 fighters enter; one fighter leaves...the King of the Iron Fist Tournament alive.



Need for Speed SHIFT \$59.99 | Electronic Arts SHIFT vies for the driving-genre lead with high-speed racing action and jarring crashes you'll swear you feel.



## PTOM Editor's Choice ★★★★



Uncharted 2: Among Thieves \$59.99 | SCEA Cliffhanging, treasure-hunting adventure at its finest—this year's best PS3 exclusive game.



Fight Night Round 4 \$59.99 | EA Sports Don't believe what your mom told you—the best way to settle disputes is with your fists.



Batman: Arkham Asylum \$59.99 | Eidos/Warner Bros. Int. Ent. This superbly crafted superhero action adventure finally does justice to the Dark Knight.



Resident Evil 5 \$59.99 | Capcom It skews more towards survival than horror now, but offers incredible co-op play.



Street Fighter IV \$59.99 | Capcom The classic 2D fighter battles on unscathed in 3D with all the franchise's signature moves.



Killzone 2 \$59.99 | SCEA The best sci-fi shooter on PS3 can pick off a Halo game from a thousand yards away.

#### Play Ball

Score with this season's best Sports games



Madden NFL 10 \$59.99 | EA Sports Are you ready for some football?



NBA 2K10 \$59.99 | 2K Sports A slam dunk for







NHL 10 \$59.99 | EA Sports The fastest videogame on ice

# 111 Essential Blu-rays

The best Blu-ray bets from TV and cinema for your PS3



The Ultimate Force of Four Collection \$109.99 | Rated: R Hero, The Legend of Drunken Master, The Blind Swordsman: Zatoichi, and Iron Monkey? A martial arts extravaganza.



Coraline \$39.98 | Rated: PG Neil Gairman's offbeat, often-creepy take on Alice in Wonderland is mesmenzingly brought to live in gorgeous stop-motion animation.



Watchmen: The Ultimate Cut \$59.99 | Rated: R The perfect gift for the comic fan, The Ultimate Cut adds the Tales of the Black Freighter animation into the director's cut. The complete motion comic is included too.



\$349.98 | Rated: NR
For the sci-fi addict, this expansive box set covers the
entire BSG saga in beautiful detail. You'll be hard pressed
to find a more impressive and comprehensive collection.



THE PERFECT HI-DEF MOVIE EXPERIENCE

Shaun of the Dead / Hot Fuzz: Ultimate Edition \$29.99 (Shaum); \$26.99 (Hot Fuzz) | Rated: R Universal took their time releasing Simon Pegg's two gems, Shaun of the Dead and Hot Fuzz, but a hefty helping of extras and fine transfers made it worth the wail.



\$49.99 (each) | Rated: PG-13 The first two Harry Potter films (and eventually, all) get the deluxe treatment, includes theatrical and extended cuts, five hours of new features, and a documentary that will span all the Ultimate editions.

The Mel Brooks Settection \$189.99 Rated; PG-R Nine classics: Space Balls, Young Frankenstein, Blazing Saddies, High Awnet, History of the Wond Part 1, Robin Hood Men in Tights, Silent Movie. To Be or Not To Be, and The Twelve Chairs. For the especially good kids en your list.





Lost: The Complete Seasons 1-5 \$359.99 | Rated: NR Bewildering, addictive, and seemingly never ending, Lost is a series that you'll re-watch again and again.



Star Trek The Original Series: Seasons 1-3 \$129.99 (each); \$340.99 (3 pack) | Rated: NR The episodes look fantastic, the revamped effects are great, and the extras are first rate. An easy pick for Trekkies on your list.

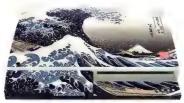


Fight Club: 10th Anniversary Edition \$34.99 | Rated: R. Ten years later, Fight Club retains its powerful societal commentary and looks better than ever an your PS3.



Ultimate Collector's Edition
\$84.99 | Rated, G
This gorgeous box set is limited, numbered, and filled with an insane amount of extras.





10 Prime PS3 Peripherals

Accessories that enhance the PS3 experience

#### WaSaBi Irodori Decoration Skins \$23.99 | www.my-wasabi.com

There are tons of skins available for PlayStation systems, but few are as tasteful and beautiful as WaSaBi's offerings.

Turtle Beach Ear Force P21 \$79.95 | www.turtlebeach.com The P21 headset's audio amplification let's the gamer hear every nuance of a game while also communicating (talking trash) through voice chat.

KontrolFreek FP

.99 each; \$17.99 to



MIMOBOT Designer USB Flash Drives Starting at \$24.95 (2GB) | www.mimoco.com Transfer files and backup game saves with

# these incredibly stylish flash drives. We'll opt for the Star Wars series, but other cool designs abound.

Sony DualShock 3 \$54.99 | www.usc..aystation.com Who doese and an extra Dual and Controller or two or add? Now available in three new colors: red, blue, and silver.

Hori Real Arcade Pro.3 ► \$99.99 | www.hori.jp/us/ Hori's top fight controller is a quality piece and sports

but trades full arcade-level components for a less serious price point.

The state of the s

Bluetostr

SONY



Play Charging System \$29.99 | www.pdp.com The Energizer charger's form and function is the best we've come across. If needed, two built-in USB ports allow you to charge a total of four controllers.

Mad Catz weet Fighter IV Round 2 Arcade FightStick Journament Edition

\$159.99 , www.madcatz.com
A perfect government Edito

A perfect generating the hardcore gamer, this premium stick feature derectly from gapanese manufacturer Sanwa Dens

PlayStation, Ti Official Magazin

► Som

Blu-ray

\$24.99

www.us

A must-

buffs, the

enabled B

works sear

access to its

controls.

Holk

#### **HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE '09**

# Ace PSP **Accessories**

Everything that's needed for the system on the go

> ► Klipsch S4 In-ear Headphones

\$79.95 | www.klipsch.com While not exactly mexpensive, the Klipsch S4 is perfect for PSP owners seeking premium sound quality, superior noisecancellation, and thumping bass.



\$99.99 | www.us.playstation.com The convenient solution for charging the PSPgo and syncing content with a PC. The Cradle can also output PSPgo video to a TV with an optional AV cable.





▼ Protective Screen Film \$9.99 | www.us.playstation.com Nothing sucks more than getting a brand new PSPgo or PSP and scratching the screen. Screen film is the cheapest insurance policy you'll ever buy.

A Limited Edition Gran Turismo **PSP Entertainment Pack** 

\$199.99 | www.us.playstation.com This Entertainment Pack isn't really an "accessory," but it comes packed with extras like music and movie vouchers, 2GB Memory Stick PRO Duo, and an exclusive car download, Oh... PSP-3000 and Gran Turismo game included.





LocoRoco 2 \$19.99 | SCEA Best described as an action puzzler, the point of the game is to help the LocoRoco bring life and music back to the planet. Deceptively addictive.

# 8 PSP Games to Go

Downloaded or on UMD, these are the games you want when you hit the road



GTA: Chinatown Wars \$39.99 | Rockstar Games Is all the Holiday cheer seriously annoying you Scrooges out there? A bit of GTA-style murder and mayhem will get you into the



Gran Turismo \$39.99 | SCEA Parking for 800 cars is usually a nightmare, but not for the PSP. The real driving simulator returns as a compact, but with all its horsepower intact.







Half-Minute Hero \$29.99 | XSeed Games Old-school RPG meets frenetic beat-the-clock gameplay. The result? An unusually fun and innovative take on RPGs for the PSP



Resistance Retribution \$39.99 | SCEA It's easy to overlook Retribution because it landed early in the year. Don't—it's an amazing achievement and easily the best PSP shooter availabile



MotorStorm: Arctic Edge \$39.99 | SCEA Looking for over-the-top off-road racing action? Arctic Edge delivers all the thrills the MotorStorm-series is known for, plus snow.





Say.99 | SCEA Play, Create. Share. If that doesn't epitomize the Christmas spirit, what does? Don't forget to pop a Santa hat on your Sackboy.



PSPgo Traveler Case \$19.99 | www.us.playstation.com Does that PSPgo frequently get tossed in a bag or backpack? The Traveler case ensures protection and it even converts to a stand for movie viewing.

### Just Memory(s)

Everybody needs more memory. Pick up a Memory Stick Micro for PSPgo owners and a Memory Stick PRO Duo for earlier versions of the PSP.



Memory Stick PRO Duo Starting at \$19.99 (2GB) | www.us.playstation.com



Memory Stick Micro Starting at \$19.99 (2GB) | www.us.playstation.com



and a few for the kiddies



Shin Megami Tensei: Persona 4 \$39.99 | Atius Students battle demons in this superb RPG



Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Summoner 2 \$39.99 | Atlus A detective battles... more demons



Ultimate Ninja 4: Naruto Shippuden \$39.99 | Namco Bandar Ninja combat still rages on PS2



Eternal Poison \$29.99 | Atlus Strategy-RPG fans need no antidote here



Kids Korner

G-Force \$29.99 | Disney Interactive Secret agent Guinea Pigs: deadly cute



Monsters vs. Aliens \$29.99 | Activision Monsters rule, aliens drool



Secret Agent Clank \$19.99 | SCEA Secret agent robot at a nice price











PlayStation 2 \$99.99 | SCEA The PlayStation 2 Isn't old, it's classic approximately 1,900 mies and growing the PS2 is still at excellent choice to younger gamers

your games, music, and video downloads means that all your

ne line between style and g geekdom perfectly. WaSaBi Hand Pouch \$30,99 | www.my-WaSaB s beautiful Hand Pouch series is designed for the PSP, but its soft cloth interior will pamper a PSPgo just as well. A matching strap is included. PIMP THAT RIDE When you're rollin'

and secure whether you're on the go or parked for your own mini-tallgate party.

KILLER CAPACITY 24 12-ounce cans and eight pounds of ice, or your PS3 and most all of its games and

> PURE PERFORMANCE -Speed: 13 mph Range: Up to 15 miles Ride time: Four to five hours

D. PlayStation

in a ride as sick as this one, you know va gotta represent

HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE '09

# STOCKING STUFFERS

All the other stuff gamers want





#### FUELS FOR THE FIRE

BAWLS G33K B33R \$32.99 (24-pack) | www.bawls.com High-caffeine root beer Infused with various other performance enhancers. Drink 'em if ya got 'em.



# Gamer Grub \$3.99 | www.gamergrub.com Scientifically formulated performance snacks designed for gamers. No crumbs or greasy fingers either.







Fretlight Guitar
Starting at \$499.95 |
www.fretlight corn
Mastered Flock Band and
Guitar Hen? Are you ready
to rock the real world? The
Fretlight Guitar is an interactive
learning system that features a
fret board that lights up to show
you the correct fingerings. Time
to step up, rock star.

## READING IS ESSENTIAL



Mini Weap of Mass Destruction 16.95 | w cagone jow-to cibulio cibulio



Warvet Dip n Comics \$9.99/mon\*\* \$59.88/ann how,marve com/digra

com/orgacontrols controls controls controls—con-



Spy Video ATV-360 \$99.99 | www.wildplanet.com An R/C tank with working surveillance equipment. Oh the possibilities...

victors (25:00)

Witoten, respectively to the control of topic lature rating games, this saw on-up calerda.



Skeleflex Warriors \$14.95 | www.wildplanet.com Skeleton Warriors that you construct—let the desktop battles begin.



SwitchBlade Transforming Stunt Flier \$29.99 | www.spinmaster.com Think of it as an R/C UFO for nerds. We like.







# TOP 10 GAMES YOU'REDOOMED TO MISS THIS HOLIDAY

THEY ROCK. YOU'RE ABOUT TO ROLL. THIS IS AN INTERVENTION

BY TYLER NAGATA

FACT #1: YOU'RE ABOUT TO let a ton of great gaming slip right through your fingers. But don't trip; it's not your fault. Even in this super-bizarro year when everything seems to be moving from the holidays into early 2010, there are simply too many titles hitting store shelves at once for you to track them all. You'll inevitably miss some that you would have loved. Which brings us to FACT #2: THAT SUCKS.

ENTER FACT#3: PTOM is here to help. We've scoured the universe and located the 10 PS3 games you're most likely to unjustly ignore this holiday season. Now it's your turn—read this, buy these games, and prove us to be utterly mistaken. For once, being completely wrong would give us hope.

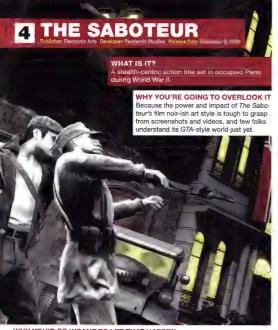








Because the gain-length still rocks, and softeenines good unings chief to the status of freaking Liberty), new weapons, and three exclusive playable characters. PS3 players will be slicing and dicing with the striking Ayane (previously seen in the Dead or Alive series), the axe-wielding blonde Rachel, and the lovely Momili from Ninja Gaiden Dragon Sword on the Nintendo DS. Finally, thanks to Team Ninja's infamous pervi-ness, Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2 also introduces an exclusive SixAxis feature that allows you to jiggle the overly ample bosoms of the female leads during outscenes... That is, if you're into that sort of thing



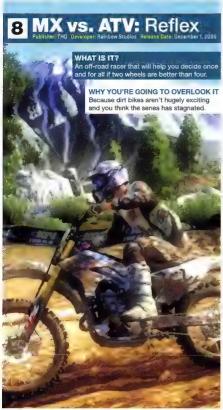
#### WHY YOU'D BE INSANE TO LET THAT HAPPEN

Forget everything you know about World War II games. The Saboteur puts you in the role of Sean Devlin, an everyday man (okay, everyday race car driver) whose unwavering resistance to the Germans in Paris helps turn the tide of WWII. But it's the way color (and the lack of color) plays into The Saboteur's gameplay that you should grab your attention. As you sneak and shoot your way through each area, thwarting, demoralizing, and exploding German forces, you'll increase the public's "will to fight." This adds light and color to the otherwise bleak, black-and-white (with tinges of Nazi red) environments and inspires the French NPCs to rise up against occupying forces. Right out of the gate, The Saboteur wins points for originality. Also, it boasts both zeppelins and dancing barmaids. So there's that.









#### WHY YOU'D BE INSANE TO LET THAT HAPPEN

Because it's still fun. You don't have to be a motocross fan to appreciate tearing apart tracks in this brilliant mix of arcadey action and realistic racing. In terms of visuals, Reflex leaves previous MX vs. ATV titles in the dust, making this one of the pretitiest—and dirtiest—racers on PS3.





WHAT IS IT?
A super-soothing
ambient adventure
in which you seek
out wild animals
and shoot them
with a camera

#### WHY YOU'RE GOING TO OVERLOOK IT

Because it sounds like the single most boring game ever created.



#### WHY YOU'D BE INSANE TO LET THAT HAPPEN

Look, Afrika is clearly not meant for everyone. But one man's relaxation, and no other game does what Afrika does. Thanks to stunning graphics and some ambient sound, it's realistic enough to feel like you're actually communing with nature. And when you get that great shot, whether it's a lion tackling a zebra or a baby elephant squirting water at its mana, it's surprisingly satisfyring.

# TUAN YOUR PASSIONE GAMING INTO A CAREER

Compact Construction of the Construction of th



fullsail.edu

800.226 7625 • 3300 University Boulevard • Winter Park, FL 32792
Financial aid available to those who qualify • Career development assistance
Accredited University, ACCSC

#### Campus Degrees

#### Master's

Entertainment Business

Game Design

#### Bachelor's

Computer Animation Digital Arts & Design Entertainment Business Film

- ▶ Game Art
- Game Development
  Music Business
  Recording Arts
  Show Production
  Web Design &
  Development

#### Associate's Graphic Design

#### Online Degrees

#### Master's

Education Media Design & Technology
& Technology
Entertainment Business
Entertainment Business:
with a Sports Management
Elective Track
Internet Marketing
Media Design

#### Bachelor's

Computer Animation Entertainment Business

- Game Art
- Game Design
  Graphic Design
  Internet Marketing
  Music Business
  Web Design
  & Development



Ratings" to PTOM Letters@futureus com

LEGENDARY
A game so amazing, the entire PTOM staff recommends it. A must buy!

\*\*\*
SUPPLE

the finest of its breed.

\*\*\*

A finely crafted, thoroughly enjoyable experience. Worth your time and money.

A strong game. We noticed some flaws, but there's more to like than loathe.

ENJOYABLE
If the topic/license/style is your thing,
there's enough to keep you entertained.



\*\*1

An equal blend of sweet and sour.

Discerning gamers can find better.

A smattering of entertainment hidden amongst an abundance of flaws.

"Argh!" will be the self-created sound-

track of this game. No thank you.

We played it so you don't have to. Now you owe us cookies.

Hey, it comes in a free plastic box! Wee!



# Top Picks from Recent Issues



## Meet the experts delivering your buying advice

The holidays are a smelfor giving, but PFOM gives, gives all year long. Here's what we want.



ERIC BRATCHER EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



ROGER BURCHILL MANAGING EDITOR



KEN BOUSQUET

Eric would like for all the politicians and pundits in the U.S. to drop the party-vs.-party crap and do what they honestly believe will do the most good for the greats number of people. Barmor ptat, he'd like restored HD versions of all 28-plus Godzilla movies on Blu-ray, with original Japanese dialogue and good English subtitles. And vss. he knows the first one is more likely.

NOW PLAYING: Brütal Legend, the Fallout 3 DLC, Uncharted 2, CoD: Modern Warfare 2 Well, there's the obvious stuff...an Audi S5, Megan Fox, and the San Francisco Glants winning a World Series, but for Roger it's the little things that count. So he of settle for a new Jumping Flash' game for the PS3, as second analog stick for the PSR, and all the Ultrainar loys his mom threw in the trash on moving day when he was five-years-old. That's not asking for too much, is it?

NOW PLAYING: Guitar Hero 5, The Beatles: Rock Band, Gran Turismo PSP A \$500 gft certificate to Zappos.com, a Setanta Sports network subscription, a hot tub, and Liverpool-Everton derby tickets. Peace on Earth, Good will to all men, women, and children. The sudden extinction of all attack dogs. Ronatdo's personal traner. 20 lbs. of exotic chocolate. Something very small and special wrapped in a tary box with exquisite wrapping that µst looks like it's going to be incredible. Maybe It's a key?

NOW PLAYING: FIFA Soccer 10, Brütal Legend, Assassin's Creed II





CARLOS RUIZ



Hover board. Yeah, that's right, Scott wants a legitimate, full-on Back to the Future Part // hover board. Oh, what's that? You say they don't exist? You say they spit in the face of honest scences? Tough. Santa Claus doesn't take orders from "science," o'kay guys? Santa makes his own rules! And come Christmas morning, he better come through with a hover board., or else.

NOW PLAYING: Assassin's Creed II, Tekken 6, Borderlands

Carlos the Intern is very practical about his gifts. His stereo's tape player is broken and the speakers are fading so he'd like an iLive Portable Stereo System with CD Player, AM/FM Padio, and iPod dock. And he's about \$8,699 short of the \$8,699 he needs in his Motoryole Fund, so if you could just drop off a Tnumph Speedmaster, that'd be awesome. Oh, and some new socks.

NOW PLAYING: Batman: Arkham Asylum; Marvel vs. Capcom 2 Aside from the usual things like new games or a sold gold house. Henry wants a TV channel that plays nothing but cartoon Xmas specials all December long Beit Mr. Magoo's Christmas, Carol, How the Grinch Stole Christmas, or Yogy's First Christmas, thing all warm his bitter neart. Sure, the Pearuts special only offers a short respite from holiday stress and editional deadlines, but what a lovely 30 minutes it is.

NOW PLAYING: SmackDown vs. Raw 2010, Brütal Legend, Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2





The sidekick steals the show in a diverse, triumphant sequel

PS3 PRICE: \$59.99 ESRB: Everyone 10+ PUBLISHER: SCEA BEVELOPER: Insomniac

atchet's great. We truly adore that sassy Lombax and his giant wrench, which we reckon we've used to brain-bash half the aliens in the galaxy by now. But the order of names in his latest action adventure's title is all-wrong. This is Clank's show. The little

robot that could rips
the spotlight

away from his co-star with an exceptionally fun performance.

complimenting the series' trademark guns-a-blazin' explodery with some brilliant puzzling.

As much as we love the Ratchet & Clank series for its consistently engaging storylines, endearing characters, and wonderfully quirky sense of humor, the real appeal of the Ratchet & Clank games has

always been their ability to blend genres to great effect—especially when it results in a large explosion. Ratchet & Clank Future: A Crack in Time is simultaneously an adventure game, a platformer, a shooter, a puzzler, and sometimes even a rhythm game. By splitting the famous duo up and giving them separate levels and tasks, Insomniac has been able to construct an even more varied and rich experience, which thankfully feels fresh and new rather than spread too thin.

As Ratchet, you'll team up with superhero Captain Quark to explore the cosmos in the Aphellon. You'll take on missions, land on moons, and upgrade both your weapons and ship while fighting the forces of the dastardly (and quite straightforwardly-named) Dr. Nefarious. You'll blast enemies with the series' trademark bizarre weaponry (like the

Chimp-o-Matic, which transforms your enemies into chimpanzees), engage in some fun platforming, grind a few rails, and take down many larger-than-life bosses.

Along the way, you'll also meet Azimuth, the mysterious elder Lombax who is an old friend of Clank's father, and together you'll explore the beautifully detailed, brilliantly imaginative worlds for which the Ratchet & Clank series is so well known. As you'd expect, there's a lot to do and explore, and all the weapons and gadgets are as fun to use (and upgrade) as ever.

#### Worth Replaying

But the familiar Ratchet & Clank formula is only half of the package, and we think Clank's contribution is the more compelling addition. Clank spends most of his time in the Great Clock, a device located in the exact

\*

center of the universe that controls the space-time continuum. You'll discover that Clank's late dad built it, so our brave little toaster takes up the helm with the help of the junior caretaker Sigmund and the Time Scepter, a tool that can kill small enemies, repair broken objects, or fire a "time bubble" which will slow down anything that falls inside it. Now, time manipulation puzzles are nothing new (Prince of Persia trilogy, Braid, Sylvia in Viewtiful Joe 2), but we're not sick of 'em yet, and Clank's approach is certainly among the best.

Clank has the ability to record himself for up to a minute by activating "time pads" littered around the Great Clock. For example, you can record yourself standing on a pressuresensitive switch to unlock a door, and then play back the recording—which will still press the switch and unlock the door—thus enabling your actual self to run through.

But that's kiddie stuff. Now imagine that central puzzle-solving mechanic with multi-layered challenges that rival the complexity of *Portal*, and with the ability to make a whole stack of recordings, and you have an idea of how Clank's quest plays out. This type of puzzle solving wouldn't work unless the puzzles themselves were particularly clever, but thankfully, they are. When you have four or five copies of yourself working in perfect sync, it's hard not to feel like a time-bending badass.

But unlike some of those other time-manipulation games, A Crack in Time is rarely frustrating—it's easy

180/200



to delete and create recordings, the hint system is extremely helpful in a pinch, and if you get stuck, you can pay a few thousand bolts to skip the offending puzzle altogether. (Stick it out if you can, though. The feeling of accomplishment—combined with shower of bolts you get when you finish a tricky challenge—more than makes up for a few moments of frustration.) And just before you start to get fatigued by the brain-busting the game is putting you through, it throws you a curve ball—suddenly, you're blasting time anomalies on a

Déjà New
Insomniac is to be applauded: we're impressed with the intelligently-crafted puzzles in Clank's half of the game, but really, it's the sheer variety of tasks and the confidence with which these elements are woven together that makes us want to cheer. The game's charming story and characters are accompanied by fun, compelling gameplay mechanics in both time-tested and totally

spinning 3D globe in a shoot-'em-up

mini-game. Nice touch, developers.

plenty of universe to explore.

James Coates

To learn about

new styles. We're eager, as always, to see where the series goes from here, but in the meantime, we'll have



change of pace.



A four-player cross between Fallout 3 and World of Warcraft. And it works

PS3 PRICE: \$59.99 ESR8: Mature PUBLISHER: 2K Games DEVELOPER: Gearbox

here are two things you should know from the start about Borderlands—it's damn good in solo mode and it's notably better in four-player co-op mode. In fact, we'd even say that 2K Games have a genuine Fallout 3 rival on their hands—and you could argue that Borderlands' cel-shaded visuals are better.

It all takes place on a planet called Pandora, a desolate wasteland where colonists have descended in the hope of finding their fortune. Sadly, what they find is a whole host of alien beasts intent on killing every last one of them. Cue lawless battles between rival groups as the planet turns into an intergalactic Wild West full of weapon-trading and looting.



You play as one of four characters, each with unique skills. There's Lilith, who can turn herself invisible to avoid enemies, Mordecai the sniper, Roland the ex-soldier and, of course, your token muscle-head, Brick. Each one has their own reasons for being on Pandora, but they all have some sort of interest in the mysterious Vault that's supposed to be situated somewhere on the planet.

#### Number cruncher

Borderlands has a robust RPG underneath its FPS skin, just like Fallout 3. Shoot an enemy and it'll spew out XP as well as blooddropping new weapons and ammo to boot. You'll also earn skill points to level-up your character. Upgradeable skills fall into three categories; Infantry (weapons), Support (ammo and defense), and Medic (health). These branching skill-sets come in handy when playing on a team of four with your friends. This way you can ensure there's a balance of character classes with the complementary skills necessary to keep each other alive in a firefight.

▼ A four-person squad seems like a stacked crew until you encounter something like this behemoth. Then you start wishing the game supported 16-member teams.









The missions have a real World of Warcraft feel about them. For anyone unfamiliar with the world's biggest MMORPG, let us explain. You get yourself tooled up with megaweapons and armor before going out on an "instance" - basically a mission through a dungeon or other hostile environment generated just for you by the game. In each enemy-filled area, you have to collect something (in Borderlands, one memorable mission has you stealing a prosthetic limb) or take down a specific enemy. Some singleplayer missions are so tough that we found ourselves having to restart over

and over again because a) we ran out of ammo, or b) we were overwhelmed by diamond-hard bad guys. It's not impossible, but we often needed extra help (or at least more powerful guns) when some of the bigger badasses shrugged off our bullets as if we were simply throwing hot gravel at them.

#### Need guns, lots of guns...

Don't fret the RPG stylings though; Borderlands is still an enormously satisfying First-Person Shooter. Developer Gearbox boasted about how many gun varieties would be in Borderlands (750,000-plus at last count) and seems to have backed up that bravado. Did we count all the guns? No, but the game's random weapon generation system, and the ability to mix and match firearms with ammo types, is impressively extensive. There are sniper pistols,

"2K Games have a genuine Fallout 3 rival on their handsand you could argue that Borderlands' cel-shaded visuals are better."

bazookas, shotguns that fire wave pulses, automatic gun turrets, and much more. Some of the machine guns are so hefty that you'll think your controller is breaking apart from excessive rumbling when you squeeze off a few rounds. Best of all, scoring a critical hit with special ammo like flame bullets will set your foe on fire and wear down his health.

But for all the delicious gunplay and gorgeous visuals. Borderlands isn't without its nagging problems. The story starts strong and then falls off a cliff. Enemies will often stand in the same spot while you repeatedly pop sniper shots into their head. Traipsing across the landscape just to get to a mission objective can be tedious, and with all the ammo drops, points, enemies, and the HUD, there's way too much happening on-screen at times. Oh, and while we're at it, helper robot CLAP-TRAP is a worthless junkheap.

Borderlands may be a little rough around the edges, and the story is less than engaging, but the overall experience is satisfying and compelling. If you get three friends to play along, it offers some of the best co-op gaming on PS3.

Nathan Irvine











▶ Um, well... well...okay..



You've got to fight army to win stage battles. No stand ng around watch-

Videogaming just got its Spinal Tap

PS3 PRICE: \$59 99 ESRB: Mature PUBLISHER. Electronic Arts DEVELOPER: Double Fine

rütal Legend melted our faces off with its utter Metal-ness, ripped apart our ribcages with the funniest jokes in gaming, and even plucked the six strings in our hearts with its simple yet effective story. An appreciation of Heavy Metal will amplify your enjoyment of this freeroaming action/driving/RTS hybrid, but isn't required.

Legend's world is so beautiful, imaginative, and architecturally interesting that one doesn't need to chuckle at stone monoliths shaped like hands throwing up the devil-horns sign to have a great time exploring the landscape and chopping up its inhabitants. Although the gameplay doesn't particularly inno-vate in any of the specific genres it covers, the unique way it mixes them keeps it varied and fun. Much of the time, Legend is an open-world, third-person hack-and-

slasher, with Eddie motoring from one battle to the next, sundering foes with simple battle axe combos and longer-ranged strikes with his other axe: his guitar, Clementine, In this world, music is a weapon, so Clementine enables the player to call lighting and fire to rain down on foes as well as activate special abilities through solos.

This guitar-soloing mini-game is a brief tribute to rhythm action games, in which the player times button presses for a few seconds along with a simple melody. The powerful, late-game solos become more complicated but never difficult. The most prevalent solo Eddie will play is to summon the Deuce, his sweetass hot rod, which makes exploring the open world much easier. It looks badass, too. Thus, it's possible to turn Legend into a driving game whenever the mood strikes, and



This may shock you, but Lord Doviculus here turns out to be a villain rather than a good guy.



▲ There are tons of side-missions, from simple ambushes to hunting quests to races against this hot-rodder

with various upgrade purchases, it even becomes a car-combat game. Cruising around the world discovering all the fantastic sights is one of the game's biggest draws; you never know what cool, funny landmark you'll find tucked away in a remote corner. To make the journey worthwhile, discovering these places grants you fire tributes that you can spend on upgrades.

#### Ace of Stage

The last piece of Brütal Legend's gameplay mosh-pit pie is its most divisive, sure to cause some players to gnash their teeth and curse yet another attempt at pulling off a realtime strategy game on a console. Known as Stage Battles, these bossfight-like encounters follow a familiar RTS template but replace bases with concert stages and collectable resources like gold or wood with ghostly fans whose power is channeled by building T-shirt stands. Armies are still armies, but they're composed of everything from leatherclad bikers on flaming Harleys to disembodied lady-heads that walk on spidery legs made of their own hair.

The controls in these sections are

predictably clunky and commanding troops is a hassle. The game also does a poor job at explaining your options and abilities, so read the in-game encyclopedia (we got through the entire game without knowing that we could jump up on stage and use the microphone and spotlights as weapons). Note: making use of the rally-flag solo makes the entire Stage Battle process a whole lot easier.

While the strategy and tactics required are super simple, it's still necessary to build a comprehensive mix of units, because the rockpaper-scissors balance between units is extremely important-your opponent will wipe out your entire army easily and instantly if you only build one or two types of units.

But these boss battles aren't all sitting in the captain's chair watching your minions have all the fun. It's also important to get down on the battlefield (you can fly during these portions to command troops better) and fight the toughest enemies yourself. Using team-up attacks makes a huge difference-by approaching friendly units and either riding them or picking them up. Eddie can unleash devastating assaults.



A Eddie does his dirtiest work with an actual battle-axe, but his other "axe Clementine, can cast lightning, summon his car, and trigger power-ups.

Overall, the RTS battles are frustrating, but can be rewarding when things go as intended.

#### Metal on Metal

You don't have to be a Metalhead to love Brütal Legend, but if you are, you'll love it even more. Designer Tim Schafer shows great reverence for Heavy Metal music, but he also knows it's ripe for ridicule. and no aspect of the genre goes unskewered. Still, he takes a definite stance, lamenting the ways in which Metal lost its way over the years. And while the jabs at glam rock and poppunk are sharp, they also enhance an underlying melancholic tone to the story. The contrast of goofy jokes and hints of glory lost bring a satisfying emotional complexity to an otherwise basic plot. But how it impacts you depends on whether you miss the good ol' days of headbanger rock.

The final important element that enabled Legend to win us over is the cast of characters. Funny, sympathetic, and charming encounters make the story into more than its basic parts. We like Eddie and his friends, and the cameos by real Heavy Metal legends such as Lemmy Kilmister, Ozzy Osbourne, and others are a real treat. In fact, we enjoyed just hanging out with the cast so much we were legitimately sad when it was over. It ended too quickly and we wanted more. Bring on Brütal Legend 2-this performance deserves an encore.

> Matt Keast \*\*\*\*



single-player gig-two to eight players can continue rocking out online. The multiplayer matches are Stage Battles, so it'll only appeal to those who dig the RTS elements. Fighting human opponents enables more interesting strategies and is the only way to play as the enemy factions, with their unique units and abilities. It's not as robust as the single-player experience, but it's a fun diversion





Not only does crime pay, it plays great too

PSP PRICE: \$39.99 ESRB: Mature PUBLISHER: Rockstar Games DEVELOPER: Rockstar Leeds/ Rockstar North

t first glance, Chinatown Wars seems like a massive downgrade from previous Grand Theft Auto efforts on PSP, and you'd be right to think both Liberty City Stories and Vice City Stories are larger and more robust examples of a portable GTA experience. After all, they're near-perfect recreations of their PS2 brothers, while Chinatown Wars began life as a Nintendo DS title that played more like the original GTA from 1997. However, spend any amount of time with Chinatown Wars and you'll quickly realize next to nothing was sacrificed with this scaled-back presentation. It's chock full of everything that's made this series one of the most popular and widely acclaimed pieces of videogame culture.

Let's start with the real star of any GTA game—the city. Chinatown Wars houses a stunningly accurate recreation of GTA IV's Liberty City, the same one you spent dozens of hours tearing

through as Niko Bellic. Just about any landmark from PS3's Liberty City is here too, albeit a little cartoony and slightly pudgier (thanks to the distinct cel-shaded graphics). This includes the Statue of Happiness, Francis International Airport, and the garish Liberty Eye Ferris wheel on Firefly Island. You'll drive through the same crowded streets, suffer the same weather effects and "accidentally" plow through the same lines of unaware pedestrians as you would on PS3, just from a top-down view instead of a traditional behind-the-back angle. It makes for a thoroughly convincing, seemingly living city, despite the old-school look.

We only have two complaints with this mini-Liberty City. One, there's no island of Alderny, which eliminates roughly a third of the terrain found on PS3, and second, the frequency of cop cars patrolling the streets is extremely high. Just about any mission we tried to accomplish was punctuated with

an unwanted chase because you can barely take a turn without bumping into an idling police car. Thankfully, evading police is much more handheld-friendly than other GTA titles. Instead of gunning it and attempting to escape a glowing Wanted zone, you can smash their cars into oncoming traffic or against any of the many walls or barricades. The higher your Wanted level, the more cars you have to destroy before returning to a police-free world. Oh, you can still outrun them if you like, but it's much faster (and more fun) to bash the crap out of your pursuers.

#### Big Trouble in Little China

You may be in the same city as Niko, but the cast is specifically Chinatown. You play as Huang Lee, the well-to-do son of a Triad mob boss. While delivering a family heirloom he's ambushed and left for dead, losing the item and his family's honor in one fell swoop. Thus begins Lee's penance as well as

It's not all running and gunning—there are tons of optional side-quests. Stunt jumps, in this case





his slow ascension of the Triad crime ladder. Lee and the rest of the cast are flawed, vulgar people who crack the same F-bombs and tasteless sex jokes as any of the characters found in the console games, no punches pulled.

Unlike the "Stories" games, Chinatown Wars knows it's a portable game and its missions are designed to be short, not crammed versions of a lengthy PS2-sized outring. Even though they're intentionally brisk, mission variety is tops, with plenty of memorable sequences that we ran through more than once (also a series first) just for the sheer novelty. Our favorite by far has Lee dressed in a Chinese dragon costume, and acting as part of a parade to keep his cover.

There's also the ridiculously addictive drug-dealling economy that has you buying, dealing, and storing six types of illegal substances for your own profit. What initially seems like a tacked-on quest blossoms into a lucrative, just-one-more-deal obsession that lines your pockets with cash to spend on guns, armor, and multiple safe houses. Add the optional police, taxi, firefighter, and ambulance side-quests, plus online play and PSP-exclusive missions, and you have the strongest portable GTA, hands down.

#### Handheld Wars

The transition to PSP has indeed enhanced the experience—new music complements the exceptional DS score (now including DFA, Anvil, and other licensed acts) and



Tanks, helicopters, dozens of cars, even go-karts are at your beck and call.

Strange... We're suddenly

hungry for

Chines

food

fancy lighting makes the city seem more tangible than before—but we have to say, control didn't transfer as well. Whereas the DS version used the touch screen to handle weapon selection, waypoint placement, and tons of mini-games (hotwiring cars, pumping gas, disamning bombs, etc.), the

PSP version has to pack all those options onto a limited set of buttons. Even with different layouts, the controls suffer, often feeling convoluted (press Select for one effect, hold Select for another) and confusing. Lee himself also handles a bit stiffly and is frequently

These puzzle screens don't

fit in quite as

well as they did in the DS

version

#### Out on the Town

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE to thoroughly test a game's online performance before a game launches, but this list should give a good idea of what modes to expect. You can also connect to friends and trade money, items and favorite locations.

SINGLE PACE Exactly what it sounds like. SEASON RACE Four tournaments of five races each.

STASH DASH Try to be the first to steal a van full of goods.

LIBERTY CITY SURVIVOR Adjustable of deathmatching.

GANG BANG Swarm other players' furf.

GANG BANG Swarm other players' taking it over piece by piece

DEFEND THE BASE A co-op mode that has you protecting territory from waves of enemy gangs.

obscured by the terrain due to poor camera angles, though that was also the case in the DS edition.

Questionable controls aside, Chinatown Wars is a beautiful blend of the modern 3D games with the pick-upand-play appeal of the '90s original. It's a remarkably (and deceptively) deep adventure that only adds to the growing empire that is Grand Theft Auto, and is so unique in execution we recommend it not only to franchise familiars, but to any PSP owner.

Brett Elston

\*\*\*\*







# WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010

Slam on the run

PSP PRICE: \$39.95 ESRB: Teen PUBLISHER: THO DEVELOPER: Yuke s

ust like Wrestlemania or Summerslam, a new SmackDown vs. Raw comes around every year. And just like those events, some are better than others. Even though WWE SVR 2010 is an overall improvement for the series in general, the PSP version doesn't include quite as many upgrades as this year's PS3 SVR. Plus, it's starting to show its age in the looks department.

The core wrestling got an update this year, with the HUD moved down by the wrestler's feet and the helpful button commands now appearing over their heads. It makes matches apeear more life-like, even if the 60-plus brawlers are beginning to look noticeably jaggy, to say nothing of the hideously rendered audience. Additionally, reversals have been helpfully simplified, with the R-button reversing strikes and grapples now. Added up, it both makes it easier for newer grapplers to keep up and also keeps things familiar for old hands of the game.







It was at that exact moment that Harold realized the jump-rope routine had somehow gone horribly, horribly wrong.

But the load times on our UMD version are still the bane of the series-a frustrating impasse to enjoying the matches. It's actually improved, but still not good enough. And the waits come often: between cutscenes, before and after an entrance, after pressing Start on the menu... Sure, you can turn off entrances and other features to speed up the process. but it still feels like an eternity before you can actually lock up with an opponent. And really, you shouldn't have to turn features off to achieve decent performance.

That said, the annoyances are worth braving for the improvements to the already engrossing play modes. Not only have the captivating Road to Wrestlemania story campaigns returned, but they now include paths for Divas and created wrestlers. All the old match types are back, including a

much improved and more exciting Royal Rumble, and the tense Championship Scramble event is a welcome addition.

And though this portable offering can't handle the huge online community features of the PS3 version, it still has most of the new modes and creator improvements. Whether designing a custom story, finisher, or wrestler, there are many more options available to the more creatively inclined grappler.

Overall, SVR on PSP remains a fun time, and it's unfair to expect a handheld offering to measure up to its console counterpart. So, in the context of a portable game, it's a good of 'slobber-knocker. But unless you're on the road often or lack a PS3, this one's not quite championship material.

Henry Gilbert

\*\*\*



MARTIAL ARTS ACADEMY SO YOU TOO CAN KICK SOME BUTT!

\*\*\*\* FEAR MY WRATH: \*\*\*\* A GAMESRADAR TEKKEN RETROSPECTIVE

WWW.CONTESTS.GAMESRADAR.COM/TEKKENS





















More realistic and intense than Call of Duty

PS3 PRICE: \$55.99 ESRB: Mature PUBLISHER: Codemasters DEVELOPER, Endemasters Studios

peration Flashpoint is about war. Not the summer-popcorn-movie kind of war. Forget about being funneled down a singular track as everything explodes all around you. It's about being in the middle of an unpredictable. dangerous warzone, planning an assault and adjusting strategies

and tactics on the fly. Bullets aren't just a minor inconvenience (there's no recharging health on a real-life battlefield). Crouch behind cover after getting shot and you'll bleed to death unless you call for a medic or patch yourself up with a bandage (in which case, you could still end up slowed down by a limp).



"Dude, I've scoured the whole

In the quiet moments before it all kicks off, you'll be discussing entry points, flanking maneuvers, weapon loadouts, and air support with a few friends (Operation Flashpoint can, and should, be played entirely in co-op). A few minutes later, you'll be pacing down a hillside and spraying suppressing fire as a teammate lines up his crosshairs on an enemy 200-meters away. It's this juxtaposition of strategy, dexterity, and realism that makes Operation Flashpoint feel so refreshing.

But there's a price for this depth of simulation. The draw distance is extraordinary, but if you've been spoiled by Killzone 2, Uncharted, or CoD, you'll notice a downgrade in texture detail and animation quality. Similarly, every building can be flattened by an artillery barrage or air strike, but you might feel a bit underwhelmed when a wooden door remains standing after being rifle-grenaded.

Then there's the AI; it gets the big things right such as flanking

maneuvers or tactical retreats. but on the rare occasion, it failed to spot us waving our rifle a few meters in front of a soldier's face. The learning curve is crazy-steep, in part because some of the simplest and most commonly used commands are hidden under three sequential button-presses. We shouldn't need to enter the equivalent of a Mortal Kombat fatality to call for a medic. It's handy that you can use the map screen to order your team about for some of the more complex commands, but the initial clunkiness remains.

You'll think twice about pulling the trigger because you can literally run out of bullets.

> Still, these are minor issues in a title that's making a real effort to broaden the scope of the console FPS. If you've got a few friends willing to try a more cerebral battle, this is an essential purchase. Operation Flashpoint isn't as instantly gratifying as Call of Duty or Battlefield: Bad Company, but give it time and you'll appreciate its unique flavor of war.

> > Owen Hill

\*\*\*



A puzzling lack of horror

PS3 PRICE: \$59.39 ESRB: Mature PUBLISHER: Konami DEVELOPER: Zombie studios

ased upon the gory horror movie franchise, SAW is a remarkably good puzzle game with a license that it actually doesn't need. As the original film's Detective Tapp, you explore a rotting, derelict asylum in an attempt to first escape and then hunt down the murderous villain, Jigsaw.

Still, despite the creepy setting and multiple "Do I realily need to stoke my hand in there?" moments, this isn't quite Silent Hill. Yes, you'll have to fend off plenty of murderous enemies (often victims like you, forced to fight), but puzzles are the pleasure here whether you're arranging gears to open a mechanical box, picking locks with nails, or rewiring circuits.

Each "level" leads up to one big, unique puzzle: a helpless victim, stuck in one of Jigsaw's elaborate torture-untildead machines. It turns out all these victims have done something bad, so they're not exactly innocent, and you determine their fate. Solve the puzzle (i.e. guiding an antidote for poison into their I.V. drip or moving a peg through a maze) and they live. Fail or choose not to solve it, and they die horribly.

SAW is clearly morbid, but it's not frightening. The puzzles are tense, darkly lit, and bloody, but

not "scary". And the limp combat is kept stress-free by your





thermonuclear warhead-like fists—you punch so well, using one of the game's various weapons may actually slow you down. Instead, most of your deaths will come from frustrating booby trap insta-kills, like a door that triggers a rigged shotgun. So you reload, watch for the "avoid" button to pop up a split-second before the trap springs, slam it, and continue, annoyed but not scared. That's the perfect example of how SAW's horror-swagger gets in the way of what really is a nice little puzzle game. Patrick Joynt

\* \* \*





Namco's fighter returns bigger, but not necessarily better

PS3 PRICE: \$59 98 ESRB: Teen PUBLISHER: Namco Bandar DEVELOPER: Namco Bandar

ekken is has grown more and more outlandish as the years have gone by. It's increasingly filled with animals, wooden men, and robots. Since day one, the Tekken team's answer to everything has been "more," with no limit on the amount of stuff they're prepared to throw at the series-but it's getting bloated. For example, Tekken 6 tosses in several new fighters, increasing the total character count to a daunting 42. And even though we're hot for smouldering assassin Zafina, we've got to admit it's starting to feel a bit ridiculous

The new characters aren't the biggest change, though. Rage mode is. Our favorite tweak (and also the sole concession to new players), Rage Mode kicks in when your health gets low, making your strikes more powerful and thereby rendering a weakened opponent more dangerous.

Outside of Rage mode, we found ourselves conflicted. We were overwhelmed by the feeling that this is too much of the same old Tekken-badly in need of a complete overhaul. But we also disapprove of the few changes that have been made. They all seem either aimless or specifically designed to make the game more hardcore and less accessible. For instance, fan favorites Yoshimitsu and Law are more complex now, suitable only for advanced players. And although the fighting system is the same familiar mix of strategy and smarts buried beneath layers of complex execution-intensive combos, it places an even greater emphasis on stick-thrashing mega-chains. New moves will bounce characters off the floor for extended attack flurries that will enable a veteran Tekken player to juggle an amateur's health bar to 50-percent in just a few helpless seconds.

Tekken 6 also marks the return of Tekken Force mode, Namco's take on the scrolling beat-'em-up. So much work has been invested

in crafting lengthy cutscenes, custom-built stages, weapons, and characters for what is basically a throwaway bonus mode that we actually wondered if we should be blaming it for the lack of innovation. Is the main game stale because the dev team is so absorbed with Tekken Force?

In spite of all these concerns, we don't want to come off as overly harsh: Tekken 6 is still a solid fighter and an improvement on its predecessor. The trouble is that Tekken: Dark Resurrection still feels like enough, especially at its bargain price. Street Fighter IV provided the model - it's time for Tekken to take some time and reinvent itself as well.

Mike Gapper







The battlefields are impressively huge, enabling you to fly while fighting.



"Only 70 characters? What a rip-off!" No seriously, someone is saying that right now as they read this.



Kamehameha! If you don't get that reference, keep moving

PS3 PRICE: \$59.99 ESRB: Teen PUBLISHER: Namco Bandal DEVELOPER: Spike

ragon Ball: Raging
Blast continues the fine
traditions of the Budokai
Tenkaichi titles that spawned it.
There are a lot of DBZ characters,
plenty of exploration of the DBZ
canon, punishing split-second
combat...and no real changes
from the last game in the series.
This is the first next-generation
romp from Budokai developers
Spike (Last year's Burst Limit was

developed by Dimps), and aside from slightly spiffed-up graphics, it feels very familiar.

Familiar, with one possible exception: This year's game is online, a first for the series. However, because online play wasn't enabled in time for this review, we can't tell you how well it works. If online play will make or break Raging Blast for you, better rent first.

You'll play through most of the major storylines from the *Dragon* Ball amangas, as well as a few What-If scenarios.

Even offline, there's still plenty to do in Raging Blast. There are 70 characters, including transformations (which is actually fewer than in Budokai 3). The story mode, called "Dragon Battle Collection," covers the Saiyan, Frieza, Bardock, Androids, Majin Buu, and Legendary Super Saivan storvlines from the DBZ comics, and there are also some What-If scenarios to dig into. Presentation and storytelling feel a bit thin, but this title isn't for people who need the recap. It's for people who already have strong feelings about Tien abandoning the Crane School.

Tournament mode lets you fight in tiered competitions. The mandatory Versus mode lets you smash a real or CPU friend through the game's big, marginally destructible, levels. Level design is very vertically open, accommodating the game's "Super Rising" attacks. These connect to another set of split-second choices that will win or

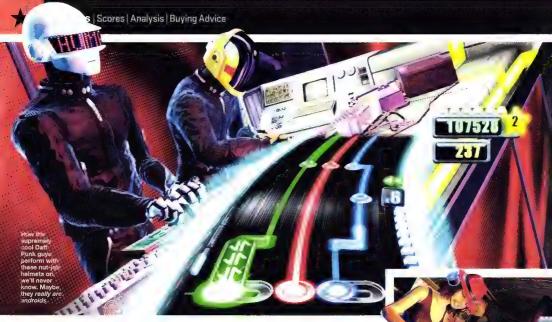
lose a round of hits, but don't drastically change the game.

But first, you'll need to put in long hours in the training dojo to get over the initial difficulty of the game's combat mechanics. Throughout the game, you'll earn points to unlock costumes, story bits, special moves, and a plethora of other elements to customize your fighter of choice. It's not quite building your own character from scratch, but it's nice.

So, barring the possible glory or failure of Raging Blast's online mode, this is a rather predictable entry in the tale of Goku and Gohan. That's not necessarily an awful thing-there are plenty of hardcore DBZ fans who will find this comfortable and familiar (one is writing this review). But because Raging Blast is aimed squarely at those rabid DBZ lovers, those gamers who don't know the difference between Vegetto and Gogeta are likely to come away bewildered and unsatisfied. Patrick Joynt

\*\*\*

PS3 R



# **DJ Hero**

A costly-but-classy Guitar Hero for the dance club crowd

PS3 PRICE: \$119.99 (with turntable) ESRB. Teen PUBLISHER: Activision DEVELOPER: FreeStyleGames

PS3 R

cynical reader might think we're too easily won over by pretty plastic toys. And perhaps that's true: the DJ Hero controller is really cool, with an elegant design that responds well both in terms of tactile feel and in-game accuracy. Though we keep thinking the genre is getting stale, if the peripherals-and more

importantly, the games that use them-stay this good, we'll gladly shell out our money for "Kazoo Hero" when it inevitably gets made.

DJ Hero breathes life into the Hero games not so much by reinventing the Guitar Hero formula, but rather by changing up the music and the whole cultural vibe. You'll still press buttons and perform commands to the beat for points, and you'll still trigger Star Power (now called "Euphoria") for score multipliers, but you'll be doing all that to music that showcases the best of the DJing scene.

The game's 90-plus mixes typically involve two well-known tracks that have been mashedup together (although there are some standalone tracks as well). Which tunes turn you on will be a matter of personal taste, to be sure-Vanilla Ice's "Ice Ice Baby" and MC Hammer's "Can't Touch This" worked great together, but we could do without Eminem's "My Name Is" mixed with Beck's "Loser." Still, all the tunes groove, and we dig 'em. The two-turntable multiplayer is great fun, but

> don't play the "DJ Hero vs. Guitar Hero" mode. though. Playing a plastic quitar alongside your slick turntable kind of kills the game's vibe.

Don't be fooled by the fact that there are only three note tracks. There are five difficulty settings, and you will be challenged.

> In fact, we're wondering if the holdover elements of previous Guitar Hero games are actually bringing DJ Hero down a bit. You still earn stars based on your performance in each song, which unlock new venues, characters, and decks. But the difficulty level doesn't affect your overall star count. As a result, though amateurs will be able to see everything the game has to offer, pros won't feel as rewarded for nailing five stars on Expert, because they can get the same prize for doing it on Beginner.

Still, these are minor gripes. If you can swing the \$120 for the whole package, go for it-it may not be exactly like real DJing. but if you're into the scene, it's a helluva good time.

James Coates

\*\*\*\*









You can actually edit each sound individually. Sure. it's work, but a single bad sample can ruin a song.

#### Beaterator

Borrow über-producer Timbaland's beats and make them your own

PSP PRICE: \$39.99 ESRB. Everyone PUBLISHER: Rockstar Games DEVELOPER: Rockstar Leeds

ot a game so much as an electronic music factory, Beaterator is both ambitious and a bit schizophrenic. Sure. it wants to attract casual gamers, but it also wants to please dedicated musicians spoiled by top-of-the-line production software.

Casual gamers will enjoy messing around in Live Play mode, tinkering with the premade

loops and beats-Beaterator's interface is definitely one of the more user-friendly we've seen. However, the fun of Live Play wears off quickly, and with no goals or interactive tutorials, the non-musical crowd likely won't stick around to unearth all the game has to offer.

However, music gurus will find Beaterator's feature set extremely impressive for a portable

digital audio workstation, enabling multiple audio filters on each track, time stretching of audio clips, and easy exporting of songs as .WAV files. And yet, too many of the game's instruments sound artificial and robotic, and you can't program tempo or time signature changes mid-song. We found ourselves fighting Beaterator's interface more than we'd have liked, but hey, at least we were able to make some decent-sounding tunes to play on our PSPs and iPods. Joe Newman

\*\*\*\*







The digital odd couple's PSP return is worth finding

PSP PRICE: \$29.99 ESRB. Everyone 10+ PUBLISHER: SCEA DEVELOPER. High Impact

riginal developer Naughty Dog isn't at the helm of Jak and Daxter: The Lost Frontier, but it's hardly noticeable. Developer High Impact (Secret Agent Clank) broadens the amusing duo's series with a smart smattering of everything: flying combat, eco-infused Daxter missions, open-world exploration, mini-games, and a hefty dose of RPG-esque customization. The best part? Lost Frontier feels like a full-fledged console game.

The fourth game in the main series (not counting Daxter's solo PSP outing or the combat racing game), Lost Frontier finds Jak, Daxter, and cutie-pie mechanic Kiera exploring the edge of the known world, in search of their world's fuel, eco. Their planet has collapsed into an airborne Mad Max-apocalypse, in which the skies are filled with fighting planes and mercenaries ruthlessly compete to find the last remaining remnants of eco. Out of despera-

> love being a mechanic because she's really too adorable to hang out with a moody guy who's best loudmouthed



tion, Jak and crew are forced to work with morally bankrupt sky pirates to help find a way to convert dark eco into light eco, giving Jak a palette of new eco powers

Even with the PSP's imperfect analog nub, the controls are tight and responsive, making the flight combat levels (nearly half the game) a white-knuckle joy. Daxter's wisecracks are less forced and occur less often, making his brand of lowbrow humor more tolerable. And Daxter's solo levels. especially when he becomes the hulking "Dark Daxter." add color and break up the repetition. The on-foot platforming and shooting are still top-notch and, overall, the game feels smartly designed.

Lost Frontier also turns up customization to 11. Jak can upgrade his trusty blaster (rifle), scatter gun (shotgun), Vulcan Futy (heavy machine gun), and the lobber (grenade launcher). And Jak's Hellcat aircraft (as well as the four other aircraft he finds) is also upgradable using eco as currency to improve maneuverability, speed, weaponry, and armor. In addition to all the heavy



Nearly half the game is aerial missions, in which you fly a highly customizable plane - that's new.



Dark Daxter is more about bashing heads than flapping gums. We prefer him over the normal Daxter, actually.



A sizeable chunk of the game is still spent exploring the world in thirdperson-but with brand new powers and weapons.

weaponry, Jak has six eco powers that can slow time, beam him to new locations, and call up green shards to help cross chasms, among other abilities. This helps open up gameplay, offers different attack options, and modernizes the series.

We'll admit Lost Frontier isn't without issues. Time-based platform puzzles coupled with poor lighting and preventative camera angles will force you to take leaps of faith into dark voids. resulting in frustration when you plummet to your doom. But ultimately, our biggest complaint about Lost Frontier is that it's been stuffed onto the PSP- with a little graphical polish and some expansion, it could have been a full-fledged PS3 title. Of course, that won't be a problem for PSP owners looking for a solid game. Douglass C. Perry

\*\*\*

PSP R



PUBLISHER: Playlogic Ent. DEVELOPER: Playlogic Game Factory

airytale Fights casts you as Little Red

airytale Fights casts you as Little Red Riding Hood, who along with Snow White, the Naked Emperor, and Beanstalk Jack, realize they've been robbed of fame and fortune. Little Boy Taylor has hired a giant to remove their stories from fairytale land, forcing you to earn it all back. How? By grabbing the nearest thing heavy or pointy enough to be used as a killing tool and going on a blood-drenched slaughter-fest. It's Mother Goose rewritten by the Happy Tree Friends after a SAW marathon.

The initial presentation is superb. Fairytale Fights elegantly contrasts saccharine-sweet country tunes and slow club jazz with a cartoon Little Red getting 45-hit combos as she slices the limbs off dozens of evil bunnies, beavers, and gingerbread men, splattering pools of gooey blood across the landscape. It's unorthodox and violent, but delivered with a whimsical humor and simplistic art style that's not to be mistaken for seriousness.

You'll wield some 140 weapons, including rakes, clubs, stloks, muskets, and knives, but there's not much variation in their actual use. The axe and the chainsaw are our two favorites. Mince up an enemy with an axe and you'll receive a certain evil chill; you can even skate in the pool of blood they left behind.

While the Quest mode is decent fun played alone, Fairytale Fights is clearly designed as a multiplayer

The levels look stunning, but bad camera angles and imprecise controls make maneuvering a frustrating chore. hack-'em-up. Up to four can play offline, two online, in either Quest or other MP modes.

But this story ends badly. Fairytales Fights defeats itself with tons of little niggling issues. You'll quickly realize it's sloppily executed, from frustrating camera angles that hide death traps, to edges you can combo right over, to poor controls that work for basic hacking, but stink for platforming. In the end, the game's novelty and substance wear thin quickly. Fairytales after all, are usually very short stories. Dauglass C. Perro.

\*\*1







Sut that's nit-picking. If you play the silver ball, you don't just want this game, you need it.

Eric Bratchs













The beauty of this game is that you can conceivably go from ground to air to space, all in the same mission.

Elite Squadron

The online shooter the PS3 has been waiting for arrives...on PSP

PSP PRICE: \$29.99 ESRB: Teen PUBLISHER: LucasArts DEVELOPER: Rebeilion

he Star Wars Battlefront franchise may be AWOL on PS3, but the series' second PSP-exclusive offering delivers the twist we've been dreaming of since day one: connected battlefields. That means you can start off using blasters and lightsabers to make smoking holes in the other guy on the surface, then hop in a vacant spaceship and switch to lasering your way through interplanetary dogfights in the inky blackness above. Then head planet-side again or stay in space-whatever you like.

It's not completely seamlessyou'll see a brief cinematic between transitions-but it opens up the battlefield significantly. For example, if you control the command post next to an Ion cannon, you can blast away the shields of an enemy cruiser in space, then jet up to that newly vulnerable leviathan and detonate it from the inside-all while your teammates rack up points blasting enemy fighters in the atmosphere and carving up foes with lightsabers on the ground. How freakin' badass is that?

The 16-player online multiplayer battles remain the highlight of the Battlefront series. Aside from the usual Capture the Flag and Domination variants, which are honed to near-perfection. you'll find one other new online mode: Heroes and Villains, a Team Deathmatch

option in which each side is made up of only the best units, like Darth Vader and Yoda.

But if you're not planning on taking the game fully online, it's much harder to find reasons to recommend Elite Sauadron. The single-player campaign is more varied and sports better production values than the first game in the series (Renegade Squadron), but story-wise it's mostly a snoozer, with dull missions and rote objectives. The single-player skirmish mode fakes 16-players admirably, but it's too easy. And Local Ad hoc multiplayer oddly still limits combat to a single area. ignoring the multi-layered battlefields of the other modes.

that the action in Elite Squadron remains fairly simplistic and lingering camera/control issues

sometimes interfere (insert yet another lament that PSP has only one analog stick [here]). But customizable characters and weaponry help, and if you're a Star Wars fan, the sheer amount of fan service on display here is stunning.

Ultimately, if you find yourself firing up the previous Battlefront for online skirmishes, Elite Squadron should satiate your need for something slightly new. After all, its biggest problem isn't really a problem at all: it's that the game reminds us how badly we want to be playing this series on PlayStation 3, with a proper, two-stick controller, destructible environments and all the graphical eye candy cranked to eleventy. How

Andrew Hayward \*\*\*







### Undead Knights

Spruce up your hacking and slashing with a zombie army

PSP PRICE: \$39.99 ESRB: Mature PUBLISHER: Tecmo DEVELOPER: Tecmo

ndead Knights is a hack-and-slash actioner that plays like a fusion of Overlord and Dynasty Warriors. As a family of three undead heroes, all murdered by an unjust king, the goal is to capture the throne by slaughtering everything that moves. So far, so typical, but there's a twist: When an enemy is near death, you can grab him by the face and turn him into a zombie that will obey your every command. Thus, you can quickly amass a small herd of undead underlings, just waiting to do your evil bidding.

Zombies can rip enemies to gibs in a bloody dogpile, run *Kamikaze*-style into flaming ramparts, bash open gates, climb onto a boss to hold it still, or use their own bodies to form a living (rather, unliving) bridge over a chasm. You can even grab one and carry it in front of you like a shield. And of course, your chosen



character isn't exactly helpless. You've always got your own attacks, and can earn more at the end of each level by trading in the souls of those you've slaughtered.

As a *Dynasty Warriors*-clone, *Undead Knights* freshens things up a bit, but the zombies aren't quite as funny or as strategically implemented as they could be, and the

When you've got a bunch of zombies doing your dirty work, you can focus on just looking all cool and Death Knight-y.

controls can make it tough to face-grab a particular enemy. But it looks good, and the blood and gore fly freely to a reientless heavy metal soundtrack that seems apropos. It's mindless fun, but fun nonetheless.

\* \* \*



#### Star Wars The Clone Wars:

#### Republic Heroes

PUBLISHER: LucasArts DEVELOPER Krome Studios

The PSP version of this third-person actioner, in which you play as light-saber-wielding Jedi and blaster-packing clone troopers, is worse than the already broken next-gen title. Camera, controls, and graphics all struggle, but the most painful omission is the lack of co-op support. Based off the PS3 version, the game is still designed around co-op play, but you can't actually have a friend play with you. In a game this charmless and udly, that's almost a positive.

Patrick Joynt



Rob Smith

\*\*\*\*



#### PES remembers its sim-pler side

PS3 PRICE: \$59.99 ESRB: Everyone PUBLISHER: Konami DEVELOPER: Konami

o, you're a soccer nut, you've always stuck with the Pro Evolution Soccer games, but lately you've been thinking about switching to FIFA. Maybe you even committed some "indiscretions" with FIFA when the disappointing PES 09 hit shelves last year. Well, PES 2010 is trying to win you back, you adulterer you. It's prettier than before (which should be expected), and there are some notable new features—but it may not be quite fresh enough to tear you away from FIFA 10.

First, we should note what PES 2010 does better than its EA competition. Player likenesses in PES 2010 are astounding, making the already impressive-looking players in FIFA 10 look like zombies. Even lesser-known players like Andy Reid and Federico Macheda look great, and dedicated FIFA fans will gaze at the player models in PES 2010 and feel, well, a bit jealous. Additionally, PES 2010's controls feel more precise than FIFA 10's, even if the ownerall pace of the game is slower.



With slower game speed, however, comes a different set of tactics. Rarely will you be able to dribble past a defenseman with anyone but the trickiest of players (folks like Nani, Messi, or Rolando).

forcing you to rely more on your passing game. Even so, tricks like the Shot Fake or Long Step can really throw off the game's balance. Compared to FIFA's more demanding Skill Moves, PES 2010's tricks are far too easy to pull off-in the hands of an experienced player, they feel more like cheats than legitimate strategies. Furthermore, as good as the player likenesses are, the field looks bland from a distance, and as precise as the controls are, the gameplay feels more robotic than the smooth FIFA 10.

But there's room at this party for everyone. FIFA 10 is the slightly more appealing soccer sim this



If you're more into single-player Master League action, this may be a better choice than the more casual FIFA 10.

vear, but on its own, PES 2010 is still quite an achievement. Sure, the licensing might not be perfect (actually, only about 80-percent of the Champions League teams are accurate, though you can customize them into proper form), and there aren't any sweeping changes to the gameplay or the Master League, but a ton of little tweaks make PES 2010 an extremely fun and tactically deep soccer sim. PES may not be evolving at the same rate as its competition, but that makes it comfortable and familiar. Don't forget about it just because FIFA 10 seems fresher.

James Coates

\*\*\*\*



# IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey

Air combat needn't be complicated

PSP PRICE: \$29.99 ESR8: Yeen PUBLISHER, 505 Games DEVELOPER; SME Dynamic Systems

ore than anything, the PSP version of IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey is a surprise. The IL-2 series carries expectations of a hardcore flight simulation where fans sleep in plywood cockpits and have no less than three LCD monitors. It's a serious franchise. Well, it was. The portable Birds of Prey streamlines everything.

Slipping you into Russian, British, and American planes while battling Germans from the Battle of Britain to the Battle of the Bulge, Birds of Prev offers a condensed view of World War II. Sloppy narration helps give perspective to each mission, which then starts midflight with no take offs or landings. Flying is also simplified, with complex maneuvers being a no-go. Simple, short, and fun, this is IL-2 Sturmovik if it were released alongside Mortal Kombat 2 in a '90s arcade; fly around, shoot the hell out of some Nazis and repeat

Yet it's not completely impossible to understand how this became a GameStop-only exclusive in stores (though you can download it too-



we did). Some missions start your aircraft in the wrong direction, and sometimes a new objective spawns across an entire level after defeating what seemed like the final target. These annoyances don't make dogfighting with aces surrounded by falling machine gun shells any more exciting.

With a few multiplayer modes and replayable missions, Birds of Prey provides straightforward aerial combat. Strange that such a simple experience comes from such a hardcore background. Carey Peck

+++

#### Turnado Outbreak

Appetite for destruction

R: Loose Connon Studios

ornados are fascinating purveyors of chaos and mayhem, and it's about time we got to play as one. Tornado Outbreak's bizarro-cartoon story casts you as the new leader of a pack of wind-powered space warriors huffing, puffing, and blowing to save the Earth from fiery little miscreants. Or something like that. It's ludicrously cheesy, but the good part is the gameplay. which involves you, as a living, steerable tornado, tearing the hell out of everything in sight. You'll motor through locales ranging from dinosaur parks to barnyards to cities ripping things to pieces, vacuuming up everything from cows and people to buildings and flame-headed aliens, and growing larger and more powerful as you go

Tornado Outbreak's gameplay will be immediately familiar to anyone who's played the sticky-ball-rolling Katamari games—you're just sucking things up instead of rolling them into a morbid, junk-and-flesh snowball-but

the twister mechanics feel compellingly obnoxious and make Outbreak worthwhile even if you know the basic drill

Objects you're strong enough to destroy will rattle as you approach and erupt into a shower of satisfying debris on contact. Causing more devasta

tion makes you larger, enabling you to tackle larger obstacles. You may begin a level barely strong enough to suck the feathers off a flock of chickens, but by the end you'll swell to cataclysmic proportions and raze entire buildings to their bare foundations

The sheer fun this elicits is worth suffering through Outbreak's less-than-stellar aspects the Saturday morning 'toon-style story and serviceable visuals that don't really push the hardware. Even the repetitive pacing and level structure can be forgiven, because it's simply fun to annihilate stuff. Nathan Meunie



▼ This is you when you're not a tornado incredibly, this is the best your species



# **PlayStation Network**

Multiplayer Strategies | Letters | Game Reviews | PlayStation Store

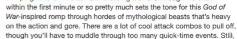


We turbo-chugged the launch line-up-here's what we kept down and what came back up

NEXT SCOT

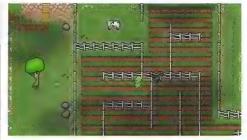
#### Tetris PRICE: \$9.93 ESRB: Everyone

It's hard to believe we're still captivated by Tetris, but we are. The core Tetris experience is alive and well on the PSP, but it's the unusual extra modes and unlockable achievements buried just beneath the surface that make this version so compelling. Our favorites of the 12 modes include Treadmill (all of the pieces shift one square to the right each turn), Flood (colorless blocks rise from the bottom every few turns), and Flashlight (you have only a tiny beam of light to illuminate the playfield). The verdict: We had reservations before playing the pricey Mini version of Tetris, but it turns out this one is worth the dough.



on the action and gore. There are a lot of cool attack combos to pull off, though you'll have to muddle through too many quick-time events. Still, the results are pretty impressive, like when you get stuck between two enemies who inadvertently decapitate one another when you suddenly duck. Good times.

**The verdict:** Though the iPhone version is cheaper, *Hero of Sparta* on the PSP has a few improvements in controls and visuals. Grab it.



#### Alien Havoc! PRICE: \$4.99 ESRB: Everyone

This arcade-style Mini pits you as a little green guy who's stuck waddling around ye old farmstead in hopes of stealing cows and returning them to your ship—what, is the "beam me up" machine broken? Naturally, sneaky, pissed-off farmers come crawling out of the woodworks to kick your allen butt. It's a well-trodden theme and goofy premise that could have made for a fun game if it wasn't marred by frustrating gameplay and a lackluster presentation.

**The verdict:** Poor execution ultimately sinks ET's quest for the secret ingredient that makes hamburgers so damn delicious.





#### Brain Pipe PRICE: \$4.99 ESRB: Everyone

This psychedelic and bizarre endurance racer sends you spiraling at high speeds through the winding tunnels of your mind, dodging snaking balls of electricity, mesh portals, and incandescent creatures. Aside from steering, which can be a little finicky, your sole ability is to temporarily slow down to regenerate. You'll also collect glyphs to "transcend humanity" and unlock your "true self." Yes, it's definitely weird. We love weird. You will too.

**The verdict:** This indie PC-to-PSP port is a great fit for the handheld. The fast-paced quest for "unhumanity" is a strange one. Just roll with it.



#### Funky Punch PRICE: \$4.59 ESRB: Everyone 10+

Can you feel the funk? Well, something funky is going on here, and it's not necessarily of the groove-thing-shaking variety. Another update of an iPhone original, this silly brawler gives you 12 combatants who duke it out in simulated 3D. There are only a few moves, but it's funny when everyone on-screen stops in mid-battle to dance in place for a few seconds before resuming brutalizing one another. Funky Punch's cartoonish, low-budget fisticuffs pack some colorful personality and style, but everything feels a little too simplistic and sloppy.

**The verdict:** Lo-fi charm doesn't totally save this funkadelic slap fight. We recommend passing on this one.



Good little games, one big problem



#### Sudoku PRICE: \$4.99 ESRB: Everyone

Assuming you're part of the crowd who digs bending their brains around these grid-based number puzzles, you'll find yourself right at home with the no-fills setup and calming presentation found here. Hardcore Sudoku fiends will appreciate the Newspaper Mode, which lets you manually input puzzles from your local paper to play on your PSP, and cheaters have the option of punching the numbers into the grid to have the handheld solve them for you.

The verdict: It's a bit pricey and not particularly thrilling, but there are worse ways to get out your numerical ya-yas.



#### Fieldrunners PRICE: \$6,89 ESRB: Everyone 10+

It rocked on iPhone, and it rocks here. Like other entries in the Tower Defense genre, you strategically arrange an assortment of deadly towers to thwart the scores of enemy soldlers that surge towards your base in increasingly stronger waves. There's nothing particularly flashy or fresh in the concept, but it's all a good time...particularly because lots of people will get hurt if you're doing your job right.

While the PSP version ditches the touch-screen interface, the D-pad setup works almost as well. It's a few bucks more than the iPhone version, but a handful of new enemy units, towers, maps, and some extra graphical flourishes add value to the PSP package.

The verdict: Fieldrunners is awesome. Buy it immediately.

The Minis show promise, but there's one thing that bugs us: All but two of the faunch Minis are iPhone ports—and more importantly, they're often cheaper on iPhone. Granted, most are still great fur and many have been enhanced. But I'll take a much broader array of new and original titles at competitive prices if Sony wants PSP Minis to be viewed as a leating to the property of the son or the property of the son or the property of the son or the property of t



## **PlayStation Network Games**



We rank all five Fallout expansion packs, then give you three choices for non-radioactive gaming on the cheap.



#### **Broken Steel**

What is it? A series of spec-ops and battlefield shoot-outs with the armored Brotherhood of Steel acting as your wingmen. Oh, and there's also a giant robot with laser eyes on your team.

Worth 10 bucks? Are you kidding? This is a rock-solid must-buy. Why? Because Broken Steel fixes the two biggest flaws in the original game. First, the ending: The main game literally stops dead when you finish the storyline. Broken Steel tweaks the conclusion so you can keep playing.

Secondly, Broken Steel raises the level cap from 20 to 30, adding in strong new perks like Almost Perfect, which raises all your base stats to at least 9, and Puppies!, which gives you a new canine companion if Dogmeat kicks it.

The actual missions turn out to be the least important part, but they're solid and you get very cool new gear like the Tesla Cannon—basically a lightning bazooka—the Tri-Beam Laser, and the powerfully heat-resistant Hellfire Armor.

Eric Bratcher

#### +

YEA You'll get full value for your money. Go for it.



NAY Close but no cigars. Candy cigars, of course.

#### **Mothership Zeta**

What is it? A straightforward shoot-

 a-thon through the corridors of a massive alien saucer.

Worth 10 bucks? Maybe not. There's no exploration or decision making—this is running down halls, vaporizing allens and robots, flipping a switch, and repeating until the quick UFC-to-UFC shootout at the end. That said, it's also a motheriode of armazing energy weapons: the Drone Cannon, Alien Atomizer, Alien Disintegrator, and the incredible MPLX Novasurge. EB

#### Operation Anchorage

What is it? A simulated military invasion of a Chinesecontrolled mountain region.
Worth 10 bucks? Probably not.
The icy terrain looks spiffy, and we enjoy battling the Crimson Dragoon enemies. But the lack of exploration or moral judgment, and only a few useful gear additions (winterized power armor, Chinese stealth armor, energy-based Gauss rifle, and electrified sword) make this our least favorite add-on. EB



#### **Point Lookout**

what is it? A rotting beachfront amusement park connected to a murky swamp. Population: irradiated inbreds, hordes of feral ghouls, a drugged-out cult and one disembodied brain with the power of mental projection.

Warth10 bucks? Yep. There's a whole area to explore, treasure to find, and NPCs who offer additional side-missions. New weapons tend to be low-tech (axe, double-barreled shotgun), but be sure to grab the Microwave Emitter in the building where the Point Lookout story concludes (you'll know where). EB



#### The Pitt

What is it? A war between a ruler and his slaves in a rusting city lit by glowing molten steel—and on the verge of being overrun by plague-mutated, cannibalistic sub-humans.

Worth 10 bucks? Probably. The twisting catwalk-connected

routes through multi-story buildings can make navigation difficult, but there are some interesting moral dilemmas, and the swarming trogs are a spooky new enemy. There's also a nice set of custom armor, a zillion punky raiders to kill, and a gruesome new melee weapon that's basically a rotary saw on a stick. EB



#### PixelJunk Monsters: Deluxe

PSP PRICE: \$19.99 ESRB: Everyone PUBLISHER, SEEA DEVELOPER: C-Games

PixelJunk Monsters, a simple vet intricate tower defense game, was a sleeper hit on the PS3 with cutesy art direction and an endless replayability that grabbed even the most cynical gamers. PJM: Deluxe includes the original

game, the Encore expansion and the third Deluxe expansion. A near-flawless port of the PS3 title. players purchase, place, and upgrade towers armed with weapons like arrows, cannons, and flamethrowers to stop waves of adorable monsters from

slaughtering the player's defenseless tribesmen.

PJM: Deluxe seamlessly integrates new enemies, bosses, units and maps and supports both Ad Hoc and Online play. Gameplay has been tweaked in several subtle ways; the Ice

Tower is permanently unlocked and Tesla Towers are cheaper to purchase, and the lethal Trap Tower and experience-giving Gem Tower are new additions. The difficulty can be wickedly tough, but PJM purists will be glad it hasn't changed. Beyond that, the game's only shortcoming is the inability to continually see the entire map at once. You can zoom out to a panoramic view using a shoulder button, but

that zoomed-out position. Doug Trueman



with a game this tough we'd love to be able to lock the camera in

The zoomed-out view is critical to success-you have to know where the enemy is coming from.



The art is simply amazing. How is it that giant rock golems with hockey masks can look so cute?



PES PRICE: \$19.00 ESPR: Everyon: PUBLISHER: Nobils DEVELOPER: Frazonbyte

Like LittleBigPlanet, Trine is a scrolling platformer with physics-based puzzles. Like the classic game The Lost Vikings, you'll need to cycle through the three characters (thief, knight, and wizard), using their special abilities to navigate a traditional fantasy world filled with gorgeous lighting effects.

The puzzles are fun and inventive, and whether you're playing by your lonesome or in three-player local co-op, you'll get plenty of enjoyment out of Trine-though the combat does become a bit repetitive. Still, well worth a download, even at a slightly inflated price for a PSN game. Richard Broughton



#### Zombie Apocalypse

PS3 PRICE: S9 99 ESR8: Mature PUBLISHER: Konami DEVELOPER: Nihilistic Software

Zombie Apocalypse is what you'd get if Left 4 Dead got busy with the arcade game Gauntlet. Four player co-op, top-down view, undead pouring in from all sides... Time to start the bloodletting.

It's not bad. There's some variety in zombie types and behaviors, and it's always tense. The thing is, just like an arcade game of old, you can pretty much experience everything it has to offer in an hour. At some point you'll want more than mindless arcade fun. Fric Bratcher



#### **PSN** Video Delivery Service



f you've been missing the latest Stargate spin-off-Stargate Universe, often-abbreviated SGU-you're missing what will likely be the SyFy network's biggest show since Battlestar Galactica. The show takes the portal-traveling premise of the series into a bold new direction, thanks largely to the BSG-style atmosphere and themes. An eclectic band of humans (including politicians) stuck on a spaceship are trying to get home, while visiting alien worlds and even exchanging bodies to communicate with Earth? SGU might not be completely original, but it boldly goes where both sci-fi fans. and casual viewers will want to follow.

We caught up with the resident gamer on set, David Blue who plays Ell Wallace-a gamer caught up in a science fiction wonderland. Blue gets to live out every gamer's dream on the show: hot babes, cool gadgets, and plenty of action. Nerds are in, and Blue is fully onboard to catch the wave.

"I'm definitely a nerd and a geek. It's no longer just guys like Tom Cruise [that people want]. Now you have guys like Seth Rogan, Justin Long, Jesse Eisenberg, and all these great nerdy types that are allowed to have lead roles.

It used to be if you were a dork, you would hide it. Now, it's really cool when a girl admits she's a geek; it makes her hotter. When a guy does it, it means he's smart. It's no longer this social stigma. It's kind of become this mainstream thing, and thank God. We don't have to hide anymore."

Blue does a pretty good job of walking the walk-he's a life-long gamer, TV, and movie addict. "I love videogamesmy videogame library is ridiculous-but then on top of that I watch so many TV shows and movies that I sometimes wonder how I have the time. I'm proud of Eli because I feel like I'm representing so many people that I know. You'll get to see more than the quiet nerd guy [with Eli].

I've always been a huge fan of RPGs, [especially] Final Fantasy. I like swords and axes more than machine guns. But, I'm a huge fan of Fallout 3. It's hard to find the time to finish the game, but the ones that I have, I become obsessed over. Fallout 3 is one.

Assassin's Creed, Batman: Arkham Asylum... They're like TV shows or movies that you can play. And at the end of day if we [the cast] all want to unwind, it's nice to kick some ass on a shooter that you can really sink your teeth into.'

Stargate Universe should be gearing up for its second season soon. In the meantime, if you missed it on SyFy, season one hits DVD in early 2010, and is available for download on the PlayStation Store now.

#### OP VDS DOWNLOADS



#### MOVIES

- Observe and Repon
- Next Day Air

TV SHOWS



The Official Magazine
Your #1 source for PlayStation



- Interviews with the senior executives and game designers shaping the future of PlayStation
- Very latest news on downloads and games available on the PlayStation Network

Reserve Your Issue Today!

www.playstationthemagazine.com



## Letters Feedback, Insight, Bloopers, and Daily Affirmations



▲ This month's conversation starter

"Perhaps you quys

are not as geeky as

to believe?" 💊

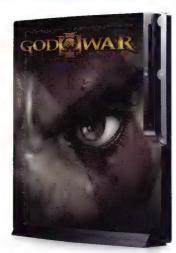
subscribers were led

→MYTHOLOGICAL PS3 Is there any word on a God of Warthemed PS3 when the new game releases? I am holding out on buying a PS3 in hopes of seeing one with Kratos on it! Maybe you will stop my suffering by shining some light on the subject.

Mean Greene, via email White game-themed PSPs are common, actual special edition PS3s (not bundles) are rare. We too, would love to see a new PS3 kitted out in God of War garb. Are you listening Sony?

#### HATERADE

I sent you a letter and asked you to make a comment or statement about EA's Battlefield: Bad Company servers not working. Either you are a bunch of [bleep bleeps] scared of what EA would have to say about it or a bunch of money hungry [bleeps] in Sony's pocket. All you cover in your letters section is "chic accessories for fashionable gamers" and the always popular YOUR MOM IS A CLASSY LADY. Are you guys a bunch of [bleeping] IDIOTS? I mean come on, I have over a thousand dollars invested in this [bleep] and you're trying to sell me [bleep] for 12-year-olds instead of telling the [bleeping] truth. Get



■ Last year's limited edition Metal Gear Solid 4 gunmetal gray 40GB PS3 was exclusive and pricey, but not all that visually daring. We think Kratos deserves better. (Don't get all excited though. we mocked this one up.)

over your [bleeping] selves and tell people there is a problem with these servers instead of hiding behind the name PLAYSTATION.

Steven, via email

Man, Steven, you sure do get irritable when you don't get your daily quotient of headshots. Three points for you to digest: First, we can't answer every single letter we get. Secondly, we

tend not to choose letters written by someone who calls us names and curses like a 12 year-old who just saw his first Tarantino movie. Grow some class. Finally, EA jumped on the issue promptly, so by the time we wrote about it in the mag, it would have been fixed-and it has been-so, we chose to write about something relevant instead.



#### CONTROVERSY OF THE MONTH

#### IT'S NOT EASY BEING GREEN...AND WRONG

Just when I thought I had a magazine that completely catered to my geeky interests I was let down and crushed when I read your October 2009 issue. On page 9 you have a small article about the HIGHLY anticipated sequel Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2 that points out how [bleeping] awesome it will be to see the fusion of powers blah blah blah...but you wrote "Green Lantern and Venom?!" Green Lantern is DC! Not Marvel! So does the game not only mix powers but comic universes as well? There's no hope for me now. I feel soooo lost!

smittytibbs, via email

Was that on purpose to make sure we're paying attention or does someone at PTOM need to enroll in comic book characters 101?

Allan Leshchinsky, Lake Orion MI

My immediate reaction was, wow, how much did it cost Marvel to get him in the game?

Memo, via email

HE'S DC. NOT MARVEL! OF ALL THE AMATURE [sic] MISTAKES TO MAKE!

Lynxvanness, via email

Perhaps you guys are not as geeky as subscribers were led to believe? K-Tuck, via email



#### WE'RE GOOD ENOUGH. SMART ENOUGH ...

First, I would like to start my humble letter with a kind gesture of praising your magazine. I love it. But almost every issue has the same mundane letters some kid spits out at random and you actually print it in your magazine. It seems at the point where you should just rename the whole section "Rants, whining, and asking PTOM to do things any reasonable person would know that they cannot." We know you're smarter than the 10-vear-old that says "N00B" every other word. You guys really don't have to prove it every issue.

kdevil02, via email But what fun would it be if every letter were sane and reasonable like yours, kdevil?

#### AND DOGGONE IT. PEOPLE LIKE US

I was at my local WAL-MART, casually looking at the latest PS3 games when I noticed a few copies of Batman: Arkham Asylum on sale. Thinking something was up, I asked an employee and she said it was a promo price that was valid until midnight. I took a look at my watch and saw I had 15 minutes to make up my mind!

Not wanting to waste over 40 dollars on a game I wasn't sure

about, I quickly walked over to the magazine stand, and lo and behold the newest issue of PTOM. Not only that, it had a review of Arkham Asylum! I opened it up and saw that you guys gave a perfect score. Well, that sealed the deal. I purchased the game and have been playing it ever since. Thank you PTOM for preventing me from missing out on an awesome game at a great price!

Paul Deaville II, Jennings LA It's letters like yours, Paul, that make all the hard

work and long hours worthwhile, \*sniff\*

#### EXCEPT FOR THE CANADIANS

You have thanked us Canadians for Nickelback (Sarcasm

much, Dave?], you have also helped defend our honor as gamers in Canada from those who slander us in letters to your magazine [We have?] BUT how is it that every winner in the "Quote Contest" is never Canadian? I have answered three so far correctly. and while yes, I can't possibly expect to win against thousands of Canadians and Americans...but still. Canadians love movies too.

Dave, via email

You're right...the winner of the November issue contest will be a Canadian, Oops, we forgot, there's no more Quote Contest.

y r u dissing us canadians? we're ur neighbors for @#\$%ing god's sake, wut gives u the right to dis us in ur mag (September issue) v shouldn't we say that ur @#\$%ing [censored]? We canadians are not fragile!! i'd come over and show you bunch of idiots how "fragile" we canadians are but i dont have the coin to do so.

JUSTIN, via email Okay, Canadians aren't fragile... just poor

#### ON THE DOWNLOAD

With the future of videogames headed towards downloadable content more and more, how is this going to affect the consumer? Will games only be available on the PlayStation Store or will there be other online venues to purchase games? With UMDs, we have the ability to purchase games from hundreds of locations and at discounted costs. With downloadable games, it seems the only place we would be able to get games from are the PlavStation Store or possibly from the developer online. As someone who is on a budget, I worry I will have to wait an extremely long time to afford games I want as downloadable games don't seem to go "on sale" much. And I think if I'm not buying a physical disc I shouldn't be charged the same price as the disc-based version of the same game.

Gabe, via email You bring up some great points, Gabe. But if the music industry model is any indication, it seems that downloadable content will play an ever-increasing role in our gaming lives. Amazon just started selling DLC (see pg. 17), and there may be new options as well. Services like iTunes allow people to select specific songs to purchase from an album. Will gamers someday have the option to purchase specific play modes like Singleplayer- or Online Multiplayer-only?

#### **MEDIA-TIONS**

you had an article about media server apps for the PS3. Here are two more programs I think you should have



▼ Okay, maybe Green Lantern won't be joining Venom in MUA2, but their love can't be denied forever.

In your October issue

Either you guys gave away the biggest spoiler in the game or someone had DC on the brain when they were writing the article. Adria Kovalv, Ene PA

Get the facts straight guys, GL is a DC character NOT a Marvel character. However, the real issue here is who is the biggest dork, you for not knowing that bit of basic information or me for being outraged enough take the time to email you about it?

Tical2399, via email

I am not writing to slam you guys on your comic knowledge, I just wanted to point out the mistake you made. But I do think the author of the article needs to brush up on

some comic reading. Just so something like this never happens again, and you get an even longer letter from some over the top fanboy, going into greater detail of why this cannot happen. That is if it hasn't already happened.

C.Longmore, via email Okay, okay! We get it-we screwed up. Actually, we blame Rob-mainly because he's no longer here and he turned in the story about three seconds before he skipped out the door. Of course, Roger should have caught the error, but the coffee machine was broken that day so he was barely functional. Suffice it to say though. when it comes to rivalries, Xbox vs. PlayStation has nothing on Marvel vs. DC.

# What's that smell? TOP 7 Originality radar FRESH GAMING CULTURE



included: Windows Media Player and Java PS3 Media Server.

I only mention Windows Media Player because it comes with windows, I didn't have much luck with it, but for most people it's already there and just a couple of clicks away to use.

And the other, Java PS3 Media server (http://ps3/mediaserver. blogspot.com/), I think is the best. It's completely free, no pro version or anything, and also multiplatform, which is handy for those who use a Mac or Linux. And one of the best reasons to use it is that it can transcode videos that would be incompatible with the PS3 on the fly, this is great for people like me who watch things like anime with soft subtitles (and possibly more than one language) in an .MKV container.

Sonicjosh, via email
The rest of you pay attention:
Let Sonicjosh's philanthropy
serve as an example to us all,



A Be careful what you wish for.

#### POSTER BOYS

I just thought I'd drop a line and say thanks for continuing to have posters in your magazine. I've subscribed to many game mags over the years and noticed that posters have pretty much gone away. I have a room to display all the things I find cool, and posters are a big part—the *Uncharted 2* poster is on my wall now.

Aaron, via email

YAY POSTERS, MORE PLEEZ K ByE Mikey, via email

Usually when there's a pullout

poster in a gaming mag, one side is a mediocre game and the other side is even worse... But to have

Uncharted 2 on one side and LittleBigPlanet on the other—wow, I need a joint custody system! (U2 took MWF, LBP has TTh, with alternating Sundays.) Any chance we're getting more sweet goodies like this in the future?

Ryan, Pilesgrove NJ Well, we can't take full credit on this one as posters are usually included at the discretion of the game companies. But we'll let 'em know you love them, with hopes for more to come.

#### WELCOME TO 1997

Treceived my October '09 issue and as always, tore into it, devouring each page of goodles as I went along. Problem Is, when I got to Letters, I was crushed by the Final Fantasy: Crisis Core spoller from some guy named Nik.

Due to having "cough" another system "cough" Imissed out on some FF games. When I got a PSP the first game I bought was FF: Crisis Core. Then I saw that Sony put FFVII on the PSN store and downloaded it, but decided to wait until I finished Crisis Core to play it.

Well, this Nik guy totally broke my heart and my yen for the game. He made mention of how he didn't want to see [SPOILER ALERT?!] Aerith die again. Um, I hadn't made it that far...and to be honest, it somewhat sucked the fun out of it. I was surprised that you printed that little nugget of information that I could of done without.

Starblayze, via email
We feel for ya, Starblayze. But
really, it's been 12 years since
FFVII released! The Statute of
Spoiler Limitations has expired.

#### WELCOME TO 2003

Since you guys have contacts in the gaming world I was wondering if you knew about Atari's plans to maybe make a Matrix game for the PS3. I am fully aware the previous two games weren't that great but I think that a Matrix game could be pretty good. The graphics would be top notch (and the visuals were the hallmark of the movies) and the PS3 would be very capable of doing anything the Matrix universe needs. Maybe they could make a prequel to the movies, (since they already did the continuation of the story with The Matrix Online) since telling the story in different

mediums was the Wachowskis original plan.

PJ, via email
Here PJ, swallow this red pill.
Now, when a movie series
becomes a mainstay on nonpremium cable channels it's
because nobody cares anymore.
So there won't be a new Matrix
game...unless the Wachowski
bros start hurting for money and
crank out another movie.

#### DIMENSIONALLY CHALLENGED

Until your October cover story on James Cameron's Avatar, I hadn't even the slightest inkling what Avatar was, save that a game and a movie were coming out 'round the holidays. But if... Wait, no... WHEN movies and games jump into the third dimension, I will eventually have to abandon my hobby, because I hate three-dimensional media-Spy Kids 3-D (wow, did that suck) is a good example of why. The "3D" gimmick didn't even work-the image was still flat, all the glasses did was get rid of the red and blue lines, and it gave me a headache. I understand that the stereoscopic TV's aren't the same as the old red-and-blue garbage. but that won't help with the headaches and unless your friends also have stereoscopic glasses, they can't watch/play with you and get the full effect. I'm just oldfashioned that way, even though I'm still in high school.

Alex, via email So young and so jaded, Alex. Remember, the naysayers said Smell-O-Vision would never take off either. Oh, wait...

#### WE GOT THE LOOK

I want to give huge props to whoever does your magazine's cover and designs. They always catch my eye more than any other magazine. (Besides Maxim—ha ha) I think the Avatar one was my favorite, keep it up!

Jason, via email
That would be Art Director Ken
Bousquet, who doesn't receive
nearly as much recognition as
he deserves for making us look
so good.

#### SINNER

I am sending this message from the fourth circle of hell—I think we

#### Treasure Trove

Todd Burnett of the Internet is the winner of the November Issue's Reviews Intro Page contest. Here's what he dug up on the adventurers in our rating scale.



The first picture is Professor Henry "Indiana" Jones, Ir. He is a "Professor of archaeology, expert on the occult, and, wh, how does one say it? Obtainer of rare antiquities." He discovered Tanis (Actually the Nazis did that, but he found the Well of Souls, so close enough, -edf, the resting place of the Ark of the Covenant, and the Ark itself and the Holy Grail.



Next is Benjamin Franklin Gates, a historian and amateur cryptologist with a mechanical engineering degree from MIT and an American History degree from Georgetown. He comes from a long line of treasure hunters that believe that the Founding Fathers hid a fantastic trove of artifacts and gold.



The third picture is of Allan Quatermain (with Jesse Huston at his side), an English-born professional big game hunter and occasional trader in southern Africa. He is famous for his search for the missing brother of English Aristocrat Sir Henry Curtis who disappeared while on a quest for the fabled King Solomon's Mine.

What do these thee pictures have in common? They are all inspirations for November issue cover boy, Nathan Drake, a modern-day counterpart and amalgamation of these classic pulp-type characters. Drake will no doubt be remembered just as fondly as these other characters and held in the same regards by future generations as he carves out his niche in the adventure game center.



▲ Really, it's an awesome resource, but do us a favor and skip page 70.

#### PSP a go go



Slippery Little Sucker I've always seen the pictures in the back of PTOM with people and their SPs. Here's a picture of my little buddy and me at 500 feet. I live in Greenup, KY and work on the road doing standby rescue service. In the pic, I'm on a stack in St. Louis, MO and unless something happens, the day can be very long! Who needs an American Express card, I wouldn't leave home without my PSP!

Dude, your PSP looks so relaxed... Attached is a pic of my PSP and me on Bavaro Beach in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic. My wife and 1 recently took a belated honeymoon there for our three-year anniversary. It was the "of-season" but have she will be brought weather was perfect, being sunny and warm everyday. My wife brought her DS to play Dragon Quest 9 (yeah, he's Japanese so she can easily play imports). [A DSP! Sounds like grounds for a divorce, Robert.]

Robert Giroux, via email

know I'm speaking of Avarice, You see I didn't want to be networked, I didn't want Trophies, I wanted my games all for me, me, me, me, and then it happened. I purchased my copy of Madden 2010, I raced home and tore the packing apart and was blissful UNTIL one morning when the Minnesota Vikings declared "We signed No. 4, Brett Favre." With a rush of excitement I grabbed my PS3 manuals to learn how to venture online to download the Favre Madden update... I repent, I repent, I repent...for not being online before. Now to grab all the TROPHIES I can get and hoard them all for myself! Amber, via email

We're not quite sure whether being a Trophy whore falls under Lust or Gluttony, but sounds like you're all ready for *Dante's Inferno*, Amber.

#### PART DOH

Okay, I want to start off by saying I am an avid reader of your magazine, and guilty to the nth degree of being a PS3 fanboy. The other day I picked up your new PS3 Cheaters Black Book, but what really caught my attention though, was the "GTA IV. Lost and Damned" cheats and hints section. Were my eyes deceiving me? GTA IV. The Lost and the Damned in a PlayStation 3 cheat book? Is this a trick, or weird cruel joke to us PS3 lovers? I thought this expansion was an X360 exclusive?

Mike, via email
Ouch. Although you're the first to
notice, Mike, this slip-up makes
us long for the days of the Green
Lantern beatdown. Yes, that is
a GTA IV: TLTD section in our
Cheaters Black Book, but no,
TLTD hasn't been announced for
PS3. But if it ever does show up,
we're going to look like freakin'
clairvoyant geniuses. Sorry for
the confusion.

#### **BIG WORDS**

You guys use a lot of small confusing words that look misspelled. I'm serious, I've never heard the word "disparate" before—I thought you meant "desperate." Another thing, it's always been my dream for PTOM to use the word "Pneumonoultramicroscopicvolcanoesiliconiosis" in an issue, it would make you guys sound really smart too. Now that would be the day... Juan, via email

Sure, we could sound smart or it could backfire since the word isn't in the spellchecker. But we ran it anyway, because we live on the edge.

#### SUNRISE...

I am so glad to see you back Eric. I always enjoyed your original personality and humor that you injected into the magazine. I have to admit I was one of your biggest fans back in the day. When you left though, didn't you realize that you not only left the magazine but readers like me? I just couldn't let you get away like that. So every once in a while I like to come over to your place and just watch you through your window while your munching on Cheetos and playing WOW for hours on end. But seriously, don't call the popo. I am glad to see you back.



You should consider trimming your hedges though.

Maurice, via email
Hey Eric, your stalker's back.

#### SUNSET

I've been subscribed to PTOM for about a year now, and in that year I've grown fond of the quirkiness of some of you guys but just when I'm getting used to Rob, he leaves. Noocoocoool Why?! hope no one else leaves—that wouldn't be too comforting. (

Dominick, via email Oh, great. There went Teresa. Thanks for jinxing us, Dominick.

#### STARRY EYED

I have noticed that you guys seem to rate an awful lot of games with live stars. Do you really think that Fight Night Round 4, Batman: Arkham Asylum, and Uncharted 2: Among Thieves were nearly, if not, perfect enough for five stars?

Carla via email

Perfection is an illusion, Carla. Our five star rating is for games so good we'd kick ourselves if we missed out on playing them.

#### THAT'S PRETTY MUCH HOW IT WORKS

Do you guys base your game ratings just a little bit on your opinions? Like when you guys reviewed HAZE, you gave it 2.5 stars. (I know it sucks.) But I think that you based it on your opinions. (Just a little.)

Brandon, via email
We keep trying to use other
people's opinions but they keep
suing us.

#### LETTERS ON LETTERS

Do you read all the letters or just random? Because I have sent better letters than those people that you choose to print or at least tell us if you only read a few then ignore the rest.

Rafael, via email You got us. We read everybody's, but ignore yours—except this time...so you know that we're specifically singling you out.

I've been wondering this for a while, but who responds to the letters in the Letters section? Who does it? Is it Scott making those witty comments about people's thoughts, or do you make Carlos do it? I think that it'd take someone very funny to take this job. And whoever does it, does his/her job well!

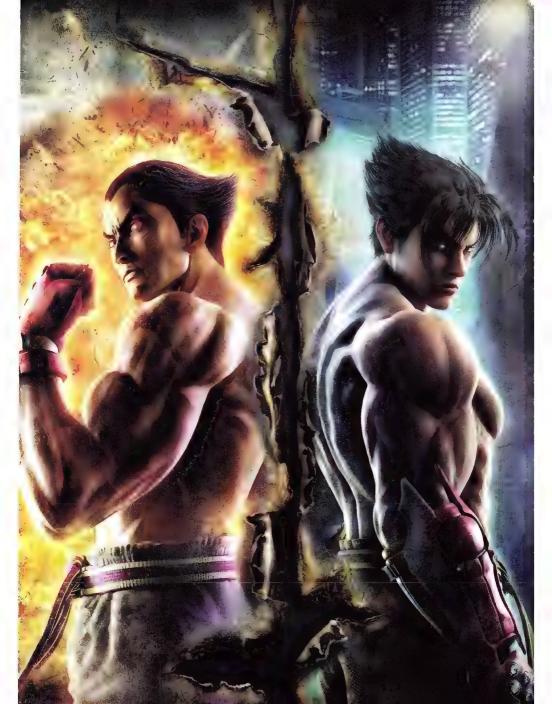
Alex, via email Unfortunately, that information is classified as Hollywoodheadhunters are always trying to poach our best Letters section writers.

contact

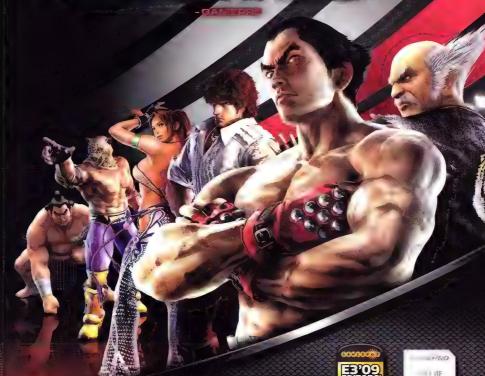


Send your thoughts and comments to PTOM\_Letters@futureus.com. But it's okay if you send us snacks too—we're hungry.

We welcome rauder photos, jetters, and stories ("Schmissions"), however, we cannot promise to publish any Submission and none will be returned. Neither PayStation: The Official Magazine ("PTIGH") nor Faithur IS, inc. shall be liable for less or dranage to any Submission. By sending in your Submissions by PTIGH you represent and warrant that you own or otherwise have all necessary rights to the Submissions to allow us to provide them of the Submission and a follows. You grant PFIGH as workforker, purply-free, prepayable, increasing, and you sub-cleanable blorses to use, copy, distribute, publish, modify, safety, translate, and store, your Submissions, in any form, format, or medium, of any kind own known or later developed and to use your same, illaness, and any other information in connection with the use of this Submission you provide.



"SLEEKER, SMOOTHER, AND MORE SATISFYING 3D FIGHTER THAN WE'VE SEEN IN YEARS."









THIS IS YOUR FIGHT!













#### "NEAR GAMEPLAY PERFECTION"

**GAMESINFORMER** 



ROBUST ACTION CAMPAIGN MODE

**GLOBAL ONLINE COMPETITION** 



LARGEST CHARACTER ROSTER IN FRANCHISE HISTORY

ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES TO CUSTOMIZE



OWN IT NOW! \* TEKKEN.COM



THIS IS YOUR FIGHT!

OWN IT NOW! \* TEKKEN.COM





PlayStation.









ADVERTISEMENT

# B. PlayStation.

The Official Magazine

# THE MOST CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED HANDHELD GAME OF THIS GENERATION

"Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars is the experience every hardcore handheld gamer has been waiting for"

- GAMESRADAR

"This is Grand Theft Auto the way you love it"
- GAMEPRO

"...one of the best GTA games yet"
- GAMESPOT



Following his father's murder, Huang Lee has a simple mission: deliver an ancient sword to his Uncle Kenny to ensure his family retains control of the Triad gangs of Liberty City. Huang is a spoiled rich kid who expects everything to run smoothly, but his trip does not go exactly as planned. After being robbed and left to die, he will search for honor, riches and revenge in the most dangerous and morally bankrupt city in the world.

# OUT NOW FOR THE PSP® SYSTEMS









www.rockstargames.com/chinatownwars











Out now for the PSP® (PlayStation®Portable) system and PSP® (PlayStation®Portable) gosystem

Made with love by

# REIRO MAGS

Our goal is to preserve classic video game magazines so that they are not lost permanently.

People interested in helping out in any capacity, please visit us at retromags.com.

No profit is made from these scans, nor do we offer anything available from the publishers themselves.

If you come across anyone selling releases from this site, please do not support them and do let us know.

Thank you!